

THE  
TEN  
PLAGUES  
OF MODERN  
CIVILISATION

126+13

BY

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**TANDRA DEVI**

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
**K. S. VENKATARAMANI**

CARTOONS BY  
**J. PATRICK  
FOULDS**



# WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

*".... the increasing purpose  
of the century through all  
this tumult and chaos....  
I heartily commend this book  
to all students interested in  
the first problems of life."*

K. S. Venkataramani  
in his Foreword.

*"It is a kind of compendium  
of modern miseries, in which  
we may find some answers  
to the question : 'Why are  
we unhappy?'"*

The Authoress,  
in her Preface.

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To Pandit Shankar Lal Kaul  
with the very best  
wishes of Tandra Devi.

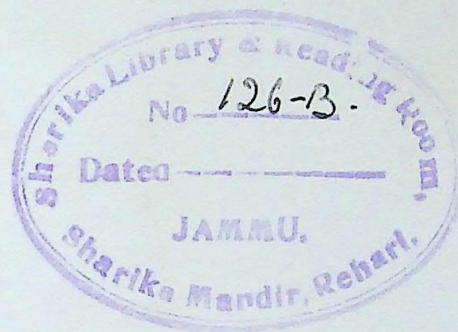
Srinagar, Kashmir,  
October, 1938.







THE TEN PLAGUES  
OF MODERN  
CIVILISATION





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*The*  
TEN PLAGUES  
*of*  
MODERN CIVILISATION

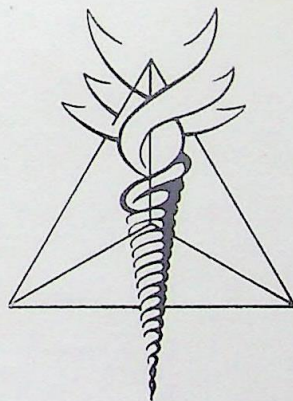
*By*  
TANDRA DEVI

*With a Foreword by*

K. S. VENKATARAMANI  
M.A., B.L.

*Produced, with twelve Cartoons, by*

J. PATRICK FOULDS



TANDRA DEVI  
PUBLICATIONS

1938







*These thoughts are offered  
To him who has nothing of this world*

*Thou hast nothing of this world  
O Guru !  
A simple mariner art Thou—  
A cowboy, a shepherd  
Or a carpenter.  
Thou hast nothing of this world !*

*Thou art one with all priceless things—  
Love, truth,  
Faithfulness and patience :  
With all eternal things—  
Death, birth,  
The tides and seasons,  
And fertile space.*

*Thou stealest into the unexpected heart  
(Only the poor know Poverty.)  
Like a soft cloud veiling the lovely moon  
Thou comest upon the heart that is a light unto itself.*

*Thou hast nought of this world,  
But, O Guru !  
Thy wretched rags, thy soiled hands, thy parched skin  
Shame its splendours—  
Its might and dazzling pomp.*

*Let us come to thee  
Out of poor trivialities,  
Quietly, one by one,  
With dedication  
And with assurance.  
For thou, O Beggar among men !  
Shalt not ask in vain our love.*







# FOREWORD

I DEEM it a privilege to be asked to write a foreword to a book of essays from the pen of Tandra Devi. She is a gifted writer, a close observer, a sensitive thinker, a worshipper of Beauty on the pilgrim way to Truth and Self-realisation. What higher Quest could there be for a mundane career? Self-expression, not for self-enjoyment but for self-realisation. Then all activity becomes creative and rhythmic, controlling from one impersonal and divine centre the manifold conflicting and contrary longings and urges of the body, mind and soul.

Civilisation—modern civilisation—is slowly learning this lesson and de-civilising itself to this higher step in evolution. Of course all this means appalling waste and sacrifice. But it is inevitable. If you want to fill your cup with honey you will have to pour out the fermented starch water with which you have filled it up already.

Refine the individual and organise just enough for that purpose—that is the deeper cry of evolution. One spiritual centre for all our actions—economic, political, social or cultural—and unattached to the fruits of action. That is the increasing purpose of the century through all this tumult and chaos.

This central idea runs through the thoughtful essays collected in this book "The Ten Plagues of Modern Civilisation". Tandra Devi has given us in this collection sensitive and subdued studies of modern life and civilisation, occasionally loud with an anguished cry of pain from an artist's soul. I heartily commend this book to all students interested in the first problems of life.

Svetaranya Ashrama,  
Mylapore (Madras),  
12th May, 1938.

K. S. VENKATARAMANI.







# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THESE essays and cartoons first appeared as a serial in the *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, and they are now published in book-form by kind permission of the Editor of that paper, to whom my thanks are due. With the exception of a few minor alterations, the essays are here given exactly as they appeared; but several of the cartoons have been re-touched by the artist, on my criticism that he had not made some of them ugly enough.

The essays were written in perhaps the most beautiful spot on earth—the valley of Kashmir. “Beauty beyond enchantment” are words which scarcely do justice to that place in the late autumn months. Humanity alone desecrates Kashmir; and, as I wrote, the impression of that perpetual desecration of nature’s exquisite creations contributed its quota of bitterness. Is there any shrine of Beauty which has not been contaminated by man? Even Tibet, parts of which, to some people, have appeared as the last stronghold of essential culture, is now penetrated by shoddy, and the blight of mechanisation is falling upon its holy places.

I had been requested by the Editor of the *Hindustan Times* to write articles on cultural subjects—presumably, the crafts and arts; but I found that in order to make my meanings clear about any truly cultural subject, I would have had to defend almost every statement to such an extent, that writing of real things—crafts and arts—became almost impossible. I found, in short, that the modern intellect has been so vitiated by modern ideas of education, religion, science, civilisation, and so on, that it could not, in many cases, even begin to grasp things that are as clear as day to a sincere artist. (By this I do not mean to say that all artists are sincere. The tastes of most modern artists have also been vitiated by this thing we call civilisation).

I therefore fell back upon an analysis of a few of the outstanding features of modern civilisation, in the hope that by clearing ground I might make a way for essays on culture at some



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

future time, with some hope of being understood, of not being relegated to the limbo of the vague, unpractical dreamer.

My friend K. S. Venkataramani calls these essays "subdued studies of modern life", and I know what he means by "subdued." My thoughts are subdued to a central mood; but as for subjection in any other sense, as he well knows, I am a rebel against everything that has thwarted creative culture among the peoples and taken the beauty and glory out of the common life.

As for the story of Moses and Pharaoh around which these essays are woven: not being of any one faith, but believing in the fundamental things of all great faiths, I have not used that story in the spirit of a religious propaganda. It is one of the world's greatest stories, thrilling enough for the wildest sensationalist, magical and withal human enough to satisfy the most exacting poet or philosopher. To-day is not the day of leaders. Each one has to become a Moses, or culture—true civilisation—will be lost. My appeal is therefore to the average person. In which way are you and I going? Are we, too, among the cursed?

Whither India? Is she, too, proceeding to curse herself with these Plagues? If so, responsibility lies with average men and women, not only with the leaders.

People are not always in a position to be able to read voluminously, nor have they always the opportunity, under present-day conditions, to think through the mass of conflicting facts and ideas right down to bed-rock. "The Ten Plagues of Modern Civilisation" is offered as a kind of compendium of modern miseries, in which we may find some answers to the question: "Why are we unhappy?"

Tandrashram,  
Srinagar (Kashmir),  
May, 1938.

TANDRA DEVI



# Table of Contents

|                                           | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| FOREWORD by K. S. VENKATARAMANI . . . . . | vii  |
| AUTHOR'S PREFACE . . . . .                | ix   |
| PROLOGUE . . . . .                        | 1    |
| <br>The Ten Plagues :                     |      |
| FASHION . . . . .                         | 5    |
| SPEED . . . . .                           | 11   |
| COMPETITION . . . . .                     | 17   |
| "APPEARANCES" . . . . .                   | 23   |
| STANDARDISATION . . . . .                 | 27   |
| FEASTING AND FASTING . . . . .            | 41   |
| EDUCATION . . . . .                       | 45   |
| "BRAINS" . . . . .                        | 51   |
| RELIGIONS . . . . .                       | 57   |
| CIVILISATION . . . . .                    | 61   |



# Cartoons

|                                                                                                                                                                                      | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| "WILLING DUPES OF MARKET MANIPULATORS" . . . . .                                                                                                                                     | 5    |
| "THE BEGOGGLED BOOBY OF THE JOY-STICK" . . . . .                                                                                                                                     | 11   |
| "THE WILD RACE FOR PLACE, MONEY AND POWER" . . . . .                                                                                                                                 | 17   |
| "WHEN APPEARANCES COME IN, BEAUTY IS BARRED OUT" . . . . .                                                                                                                           | 23   |
| "THE PATHS OF PROGRESS ARE STREWN WITH THE LIFELESS" . . . . .                                                                                                                       | 28   |
| "WE MANUFACTURE EVERYTHING THERE BUT MEN. TO BRIGH-<br>TEN, TO STRENGTHEN, TO REFINE OR TO FORM A SINGLE<br>LIVING SPIRIT NEVER ENTERS INTO OUR ESTIMATE OF<br>ADVANTAGES" . . . . . | 33   |
| "IF I EAT TOO MUCH, MY BROTHER WANTS" . . . . .                                                                                                                                      | 40   |
| "PLANKS AS OF WOOD, BLOWING ACROSS THEM" . . . . .                                                                                                                                   | 45   |
| "EDUCATIONALISTS HAVE NOT YET FOUND OUT THE WAY TO<br>USE THE BRAIN" . . . . .                                                                                                       | 51   |
| "HUMANITY—PIERCED BY THE SWORDS FORGED BY THE FOL-<br>LOWERS OF CREEDS" . . . . .                                                                                                    | 56   |
| "CIVILISED MAN HAS TO GO OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS OF<br>SOLITARY VISION, SOLITARY JUDGMENT, SOLITARY ACTION" . . . . .                                                                | 62   |



# THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

## PROLOGUE

THERE is an old Bible story which, though to some it may sound absurd, is nevertheless profoundly true. It is the story of the tussle between Moses and the reigning Pharaoh for the release of the Jewish nation which the Pharaoh held in bondage in Egypt.

Moses was very keen to get his people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. But Pharaoh was adamant : he would not let them go. Now Moses, who was a great and wise man and a very great magician to boot, was keen to persuade the Pharaoh by a miracle or two, that it might be politic to let these people go, who had as leader such a dangerously powerful man. It might have been thought that Pharaoh could have had Moses put away quietly ; but Pharaoh was—shall we say—superstitious. He was not sure what might happen to him, how his interests would be affected, if Moses were thus disposed of. No : Moses had to stay. He was too powerful an enemy to kill.

But, dangerous as was Moses, and powerful, the God he served was even more dangerous, and more powerful. Curiously enough (according to the Bible story) Moses did not seem quite to realise this. Moses wanted to do a miracle or two, frighten Pharaoh, and get his people out. But this was not enough for the God of Moses ; and so, when Moses had turned a river to blood, etc., and Pharaoh wasn't in the least worried (or so he let it appear), Moses had to go off and consult the Lord. Now here is the significant part of this story. The Lord said to Moses, in so many



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

words: "My Boy, hang on awhile. I am on this business, so just you leave it to me. But lest you get disheartened, I will tell you beforehand what I am going to do. I am casting, and am going to continue to cast, Spells upon Pharaoh—Spell after Spell—so that even if his heart would soften, in the very nature of things, and he would let My people go, yet shall I keep it hard, by My Spells, until such time as he shall have been visited by Plague upon Plague and have endured great sufferings. You, Moses, shall be My instrument to send these Plagues upon this king and his people; and the Plagues shall be so grievous that at last he and they will not only understand but also know with their hearts, that God is God, and misery falls upon all who go against My Will. Then I shall withdraw My Spells, and Pharaoh will let My people go. And they shall go to the Land which I have promised them. And Pharaoh will be at peace."

Then Moses found the Pharaoh, and said: "Now let us go, three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." But Pharaoh would not. So Moses went out and did as his God bade him to do; and he sent ten Plagues upon Pharaoh and upon the land of Egypt. And those Plagues were grievous indeed.

This grand old story is so true in our day, that I have been tempted to re-tell it in modern terms. For the fair world seems to be suffering the visitation, not of one Plague after another, made by a master-magician and withdrawn at the Will of his God, but by many Plagues running concurrently, made by the will and the folly, not of one hard-hearted Pharaoh, but of many very hard-hearted human beings. Yet it seems that, like the ancient Pharaoh, their hearts are only hard because of the Spell which is upon them. Something, deep down in these hardened and foolish hearts of ours, is going ultimately to break this Spell. We know that. Some of us are anxious to hasten the breaking. Looking round upon the Plagues, we find, however, that unlike those Plagues which God sent upon Egypt *via* Moses, these Plagues sent *via* ourselves can only be withdrawn by our own separate individual



## PROLOGUE

action. Therefore it is of no use to sit down with folded hands and say: "Things will come right in time—when it is the Lord's Will that they *should* come right!" This fatalistic attitude covers mere laziness, and is not holy at all, as some people imagine it to be. When people talk about the "Lord's Will", one generally finds them unwilling to carry out the obvious tasks of the Lord.

How shall we hasten to break the Spell? First: what is this Spell which exercises so much power over modern hearts?

The Spell sent to harden modern hearts is "Civilisation". The Plagues sent to break the Spell within modern hearts—ultimately, to soften and enlighten them through much tribulation—are Fashion; Speed; Competition; "Appearances"; Standardisation; Feasting and Fasting; Education; "Brains"; Religions; and Civilisation.

The way out of these Plagues is to examine them, carefully, one by one; to see just what they are worth (to see with the heart) and, by taking right ways from moment to moment in our own personal lives wherever these lives are in contact with Civilisation and its Plagues, to break the Spell each one for him or herself.

In our time, we have no Moses. In our time, the Prophets appear to be useless unless we ourselves become as they. It looks as if they had withdrawn themselves until we grow up. In our time Democracy rules. But most of us have forgotten that Democracy need not only mean levelling down, but, if it is to succeed, *must* mean levelling ourselves up. If it is right to raise the masses, it is also right to raise a few among these to the level of the Prophets. Democracy works both ways; but many of us only look one way—down. I do not see insurmountable difficulties in the way of our becoming Prophets. It is, for the individual, mainly nowadays a question of becoming truly simple. Anybody who could become truly simple amid modern life, could not help becoming a Prophet. The process would inevitably make him into one. It is not a question of building up, but of pulling down the walls of Civilisation—not outside ourselves but within ourselves—and of casting out the Spell that binds the heart.



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

I ask: Would any devoted Christian ever dare to think of the Mother of Jesus dressed in a smart coat and skirt (slinky skirt, of course, showing the outlines of the figure, often with less modesty than would simple nakedness) and a hat well down over one eye? Would they dare to think of Jesus in a morning coat? But I will not go on, it is revolting. I am ashamed to write it.

Insofar as a garment expresses any of the aforementioned base qualities, it is unfit for civilised mankind, and therefore barbarous.

Fashion is foisted upon willing dupes by market-manipulators. Some years ago these manipulators went a little too far, and even fashionable women saw through them and rebelled. There was a glut of steel on the market, and they tried to bring in steel hoops again, which, worn under the skirt, make it bulge far out and make of every wearer a prisoner in her own steel jail. Sport was stronger than vanity here, and the market-manipulators lost.

Why was there a fashion for very short and narrow skirts during the Great War 1914—18? Simply because there was a shortage in production of dress materials. People were too busy making bombs. After that war, when it was necessary to whack up the textile industries, because armaments for the moment were "quiet" (most of the combatants being dead or their lives maimed, a new generation had to be awaited which would submit in forgetfulness to the armaments ramp) skirts became full again, very full, and the usual fashion paper slush was invented to "cover" the change. How long will my sex submit to this outrage upon intelligence?

In the wake of each change of Fashion comes change of shoes, gloves, purses and bags, hairdressing styles, jewels, cars, furniture and furnishings, and so on. Each change compels the slave of Fashion to change all these things insofar as he—or she—has money or can command credit to do so. Whilst they are doing this—grinding out life and soul on this—health and leisure may go by the board. Fashion must come first! Culture of soul is scarcely if ever thought of by these people. Fashion, by a hundred



## FASHION

thousand wiles of press and pressure, has pushed this true culture so far into the background, that those who dare to try, even tentatively, to live really for the soul (not merely on Sundays, when Fashion decrees that we may go to the Fashion Parade at Church) are usually made the laughing-stock of their fellows, or are, at best, shunned by them, boycotted by them, and not allowed to live by them.

*"Think of the work Fashion gives to the people", cries the slave, hugging his chains. "Think of the creative artistry the people aren't working at, because you give them this rubbish to work at, instead of arts and crafts, done by hand or machine", replies the person who sees through the show. "Ah, but think of the cost of the fine arts and crafts! Entirely beyond the incomes of the people," still urges the slave of fashion. "No! Not beyond the incomes of the people, if you gave up your gauds and gluttonies and paid them fully for a few things well-made," again answers the man who sees through the show.*

Greed of one man produces starvation of another. Folly of one man produces ignorance and incompetence in another. In the long run, this folly-engendered starvation and ignorance and incompetence produce the social disease called anarchy. And by anarchy the greedy and the foolish are swept away by the blind forces born of greed and folly; and thus the game ever begins anew, with fresh players. Unfortunately the wise people are also swept away.

How long are rational men and women going to remain party to this weary round? How often must history repeat itself before the greed-ridden and the folly-bemused will have learned their lessons? Are these (not only the exploited, but the exploiters) to remain in suffering and in the fear of more sufferings to come, forever? "Yes", says the God of Moses: "They will so remain until the fruits of their own Plagues are exhausted within their own hearts."

This Plague of Fashion extends to morals, religions and education. The precious beings of our children are sacrificed, in



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

expensive, usually useless, and often pernicious schools, to this God. One of my daughters, fresh from one of these schools, once asked me (in a stupid, artificial voice which it was the Fashion to cultivate—each generation has its Fashion in the abuse of voice and speech) “Mother! Is it *the thing* to believe in the Holy Trinity?” Another of my daughters was “put in Coventry” (that is, left utterly alone in every way and not spoken to for many days, until, in fact, she apologised and “gave in”) by her whole school, because she insisted on saying “one” does this or that, instead of the ungrammatical “you” do this or that, when the generalisation “one” is meant. Thus is Fashion forced upon the young tender child.

I know a man who as a child was a pupil in a London National School. It was then Fashionable to teach the working classes that all Indians were “black heathen.” One day his form-master asked this boy: “What are you dreaming about?” The boy answered: “I’m dreaming about India, sir.” The master promptly thrashed him before the whole form, remarking: “I’ll soon thrash the India out of you.” Fashion again. It would not “pay” to thrash the India out of English working lads to-day. India is Fashionable now. (Similar folly obtains in all countries. Many are guilty of it in India, just as Mussolini is, in Italy, and Hitler, in Germany. The world is choked with it. Nearly all of us are doing that which “pays”. No country is without this sin. The whole world is ruled by the idea of momentary gain.)

With Fashion in all its forms goes intolerance. Fashion is always the expression of greed, for greed is intolerant of all that threatens its objective.

The idea of abolishing Fashion does not include the abolishment of “shows”. A “show” is dear to the hearts of simple folk, and the powerful and wealthy folk should make shows to please the people. That is the harmless use of ‘pomp, and does not even involve being Fashionable, but only being magnificent on occasion, and beautiful—both very different, and necessary, things.

Who has not wearied of religious Fashions—Ralph Waldo Trine, Coué, Christian Science (which always seems to me to



## FASHION

pander to the greediest in man) and what-not? America, also, is full of pseudo-yogis. India is cursed with pseudo-seers and "holy" men. Even her true holy people are often not permitted to exercise their full influence because their followers insist on making "Fashions" of them. I have seen the followers of Annie Besant, who was undoubtedly a very good and very great woman, so bemused by the Annie Besant "cult" or Fashion that they unconsciously imitated her tiniest physical peculiarities, and by thus modelling themselves upon her merely muscular reactions, fooled themselves into believing that they acquired merit!

If the Lord Buddha moved and spoke in a certain way, why should I therefore move and speak likewise? If life brought a certain set of circumstances to the Master Christ, why should I seek in every circumstance to reproduce His life as accident or intention brought it to Him? By living *my* life as well as I can—by cultivating my own individual soul to the utmost of its "individual uniqueness", as Krishnamurti puts it—I can alone get nearer to Their stature and develop some measure of understanding akin to Theirs'.

Fashion indeed makes slaves of us all! It makes us craven and afraid! It also makes us fools!

I shall never forget an impression created in me by Fashion many years ago. I had been living for some time among poor and very simple Indian friends, dressed in a poor woman's *sari* and following the simple ways of my host and hostess. Suddenly I left for Europe. On arrival at Aden I was leaning over the side of the liner, looking at the traffic in the bay, when a launch steamed close up. Several European women were aboard. They were dressed in the latest Fashion. The impression it made upon me was that of escaped lunatics. The women were very thin. They appeared to have neither busts nor hips. They were clothed from high-collared neck to the ankles in tight black satin shiny coats, close-fitting, so that they could only walk with short, mincing steps. They had very high heels and black shiny shoes with broad paste buckles (I think) and their faces were powdered dead white, with



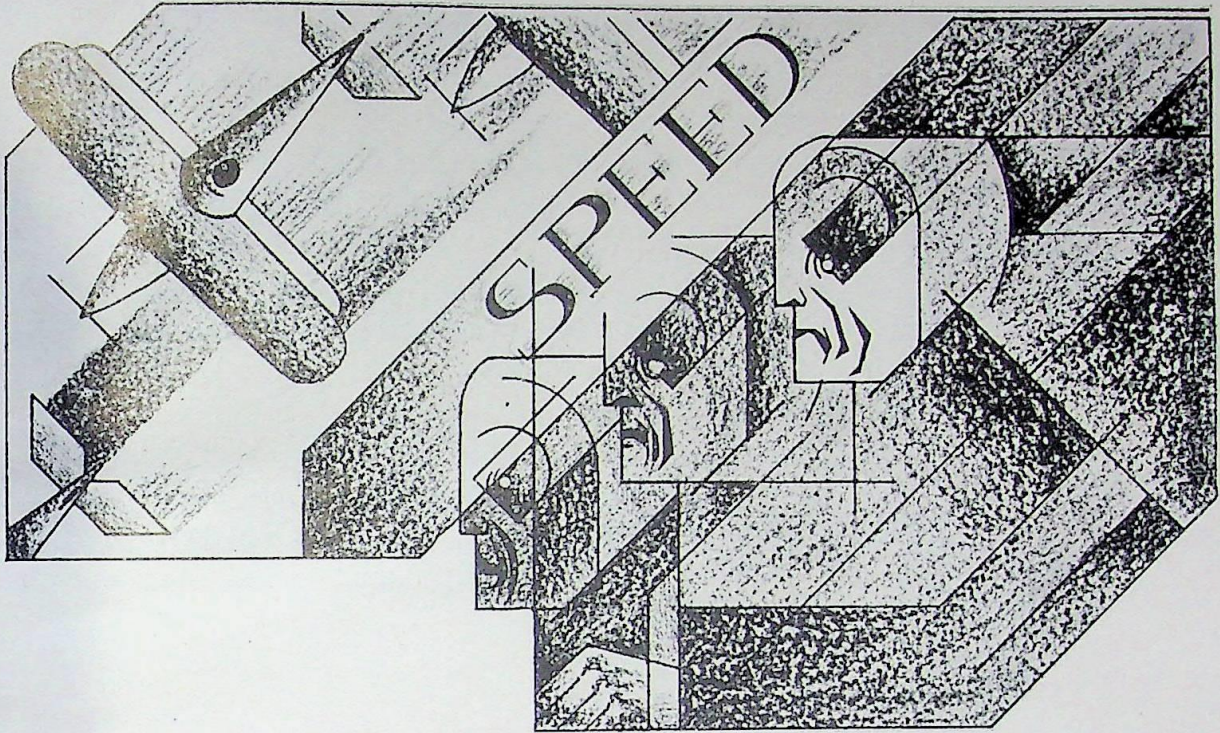
## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

little splodges of rouge—round, and irritatingly ugly—high up on each cadaverous-looking cheek-bone. It was the Fashion to look cadaverous. One saw no foreheads, because they wore positively enormous black shiny and drooping hats; so that the facial effect was that of a shocking little mask, cut off at chin and brow by high up-standing collar and hat, and underneath these a nasty slit of scarlet mouth.

Really, it was very nasty. But the nastiest thing of all was their conceit of themselves. They were so sure of themselves! They were in the Fashion, therefore calm! I, on the contrary, was out of the Fashion, and they sneered at me. But I could, at least, see them as they really were.

To stand aside from Fashion—to be free of custom as mere custom—would surely be the first step towards emancipating ourselves from this grievous Plague. Life is short—this life, for each one of us, at least. Suppose we have even no belief in another life; is it not therefore all the more imperative that we should make the most of this one? No one who follows Fashion can make the most of life; for he is unable to achieve grandeur, dignity, nobility or peace. He is unable to attend to Himself.





"THE BEGOGGLED BOOBY OF THE JOY STICK"

FIVE senses, it would appear, have been bestowed upon us for use, enjoyment, and perhaps, ultimately, for illumination. Their possibilities are infinite. They have, in the ultimate analysis, some mysterious and dynamic relationships with Cosmic Things. Such, however, is our perversity, that for a long period we have preferred to exist *minus* most of the good things the senses should bring to us. Yet, during that period, we have believed that we were getting the best out of life, and giving to the senses all that they craved. American hurry, for instance, from the angle of those who are embroiled in it, seems to be a much-to-be-desired state, and "having a great time," the sum of existence. It is a long time since humanity as a whole has enjoyed and profited by the full development of the senses. The senses in man should be at least as keen as those of the wild animal. Civilisation has left man bereft of many of his natural powers. Hence I declare



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

that most of us "prefer to exist *minus* most of the good things the senses should bring to us."

Rush and scramble not only affect the young: they have entered into the lives of all. "I have no time", gasps the average matron, so frequently, that one loses count of her timelessness. I was once having a domestic telephone installed in my home. (By means of this, one telephones from room to room.) "It saves time", I explained to a venerable Buddhist monk who was my guest. "And—what do you do with the time that is saved?" he queried. That pulled me up. What *did* I do with the time that was "saved"? On examination I found that I rushed, as usual, during the "saved" time, and never really caught myself up at all.

Now telephones and cars and aeroplanes and the like are blessings of science to man. Yet we have made a Plague of Speed, thus defeating the beneficence of science. (By this I do not mean that all modern science is beneficent!)

No one but a fool—or worse, a crank—would want to dispense with the good modern servants of Speed, when Speed is needed. Speed is needed in emergency, when haste is needed; but we have made of haste an end in itself. This applies more to Western than to Eastern life; but this Plague is slowly and surely also encroaching upon the East.

Speed is constantly confused with hurry. I use it in the hurry sense in this essay. Hurry can of course never become efficiency, though it is often nowadays mistaken for it. "Speed," said a Wise Man, "can only become essential when it travels at such a speed that Speed is stillness." This thing—hurry—which is modern Speed, is a two-faced monster. One aspect is inertia; the other, scurry. Wherever there is inertia, there also is the possibility of the Speedster. For with inertia of the mind comes the lack of understanding which permits mere physical Speed to take the place of psychological alertness. The "flannelled fool of the wicket" or the "begoggled booby of the joy-stick," are reverse pictures of inert beings. Theirs is not psychological alertness. They are spiritual impotents—hence the dashing about.



## SPEED

The old saying: "It is the pace that kills," seems not to trouble those who follow in the wake of this inhuman Speed monster. They worship pace; they have lost themselves—or seek to do so—in Speed. They are possessed of a reckless, restless demon who drives them headlong into the oblivion which characterises the Speedster. This oblivion is a numbness of sense and of perceptive power, which results from violent over-stimulation by a too rapid succession of objects and affairs.

To live hurriedly precludes living wholly, and seeing life whole.

The human machine is not built for any form of violence; and hurry—whether of events or of objects—greatly injures it. We have hurried and paced and banged and speeded-up so much, that most of us are in a psychologically and physically sickened state, wherein we are unable and unfit to take stock of the situation in which we are caught, and, of course, by that state we are quite unfitted to participate in any of the finer enjoyments of life.

Nervous ailments and mental instability are among the curses of Speed.

The numbness which is one of the symptoms of the Speed Plague has us in its grip; and the diseases following in its train eat into our vital beings whilst we are swallowed up in unconsciousness.

Yet, there is a true Speed. Nature seems to have made us to function within certain limits of *this* Speed, differing widely, but yet with a discernible adaptation to the surrounding elements and to our individual basic "personal rhythms"—if I may coin such a phrase to denote the breath and heart rhythms and chemical and nervous actions and reactions which naturally come about under the double stimulus from outer surroundings on the one hand, and the action of the human psyche on the physical organism, on the other.

These individual basic "personal rhythms" always tend, if left to themselves, to produce peace (not inertia), keen and sensitive enjoyment by the senses, and a general and genuine



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

well-being, which well-being can never be produced in any other way. When we live in our own rhythms, we are happy.

Man was made for happiness, not for a delirium born of drugging—whether of poison-herbs, or of the far worse poison of energies misplaced.

Everywhere, on all hands, artificial methods of living are permitted to interfere with our natural rhythms. What will be the ultimate end—since already Nemesis has overtaken the senses and the finer faculties of practically the entire race? I mean this literally: Most of us can no longer use even our five senses as they were made to be used. How, then, can we hope for the finer faculties which are based upon the proper functioning of the senses?

By this I do not mean that it behoves us to become country gorms and to relinquish the amenities of existence. We need more happiness, and ever more happiness. Happiness is our birthright. We need everything that is good for us. Only we must make certain that it is good for us.

We have to make certain, then, what are amenities and what constitutes happiness. The answers to these questions depend upon another one: What is the object of our lives? Personally I favour keeping my senses as keen as Providence allows, and enjoying every instant of life to the utmost. This must mean some health, some service, some relaxation. Frantic excitement is not relaxation, and if I am churned in a car for four or five hours Speeding, I get out unfit really to enjoy, to serve or to relax.

If we *have* to be churned, in the course of our labours for this cause or that, let us not extol the churning, but accept it in a spirit of sacrifice, this inevitable suffering, praying that the process may be but a temporary one for the human race. If we *must* be bleated at by loud speakers, and ourselves bleat through microphones, because in a crazy world everyone is now too far gone insane to hearken to the voice of his fellow in calmer ways, and to be content with precious and intimate things—then we must, of course, suffer these disturbing elements also as martyrs, only praying for wisdom that we may use all artificial means of locomotion and interchange



## SPEED

of ideas, as truly as we can, until the Speed-Plague shall have passed, and we shall have learned sense in using the blessings of science.

Speed makes us ugly, senseless (no time to see, hear, taste, touch or smell), unhealthy in mind and body. Why have we embraced it? Is it through despair, the longing to forget the life we cannot master? Is it greed that goads us on? Speed in business, in education, is ruining honour and dulling faculty.

If we but stopped to think, this Plague would go. "What would happen if I stopped?" wails the Speed-driven schoolboy, or the Speed-conquered director of a firm. Conscience answers: "My precious life is of more avail than a degree," or, "My soul is more valuable than a fortune."

"This is all very well," say some, "but what of the lives of those who are or may be dependent upon the young graduate or the older man of business?" Has he not a responsibility to these? Certainly. But a broken life, a dimmed soul, are no support for a family or a group. *"If thy right arm offend thee, cut it off. It is better to go through life maimed than that thine arm offend thee"* (Jesus). *"Better go through life alone, than in the company of fools"* (Buddha). People who are not ready to take "the step in the dark" for the sake of right, will not rid themselves of their own sufferings or help their neighbours to rid themselves of sufferings. A Canadian writer, W. Eric Harris gives a graphic account of life in the United States: "The enjoyment of the simple things of life is a lost art to most of the people of the United States.....the pace of their lives is terrific..... Little recking of the higher things, caring nothing for intellect or the arts, the American type knows little more than the latest in sport or in dancing or in the theatre. It lives its life without allowing anything to interrupt its hectic, maddening pursuit of the unobtainable..... Dr. William Starr Myers, Professor of History and Politics in Princeton University (1923) gives the following figures, after stating that they are not 'mathematically correct' but 'indicate the aggregate judgment':—

*"Taking the population of the United States at 105,000,000 they claim that 45,000,000 are sub-normal in intelligence....."*



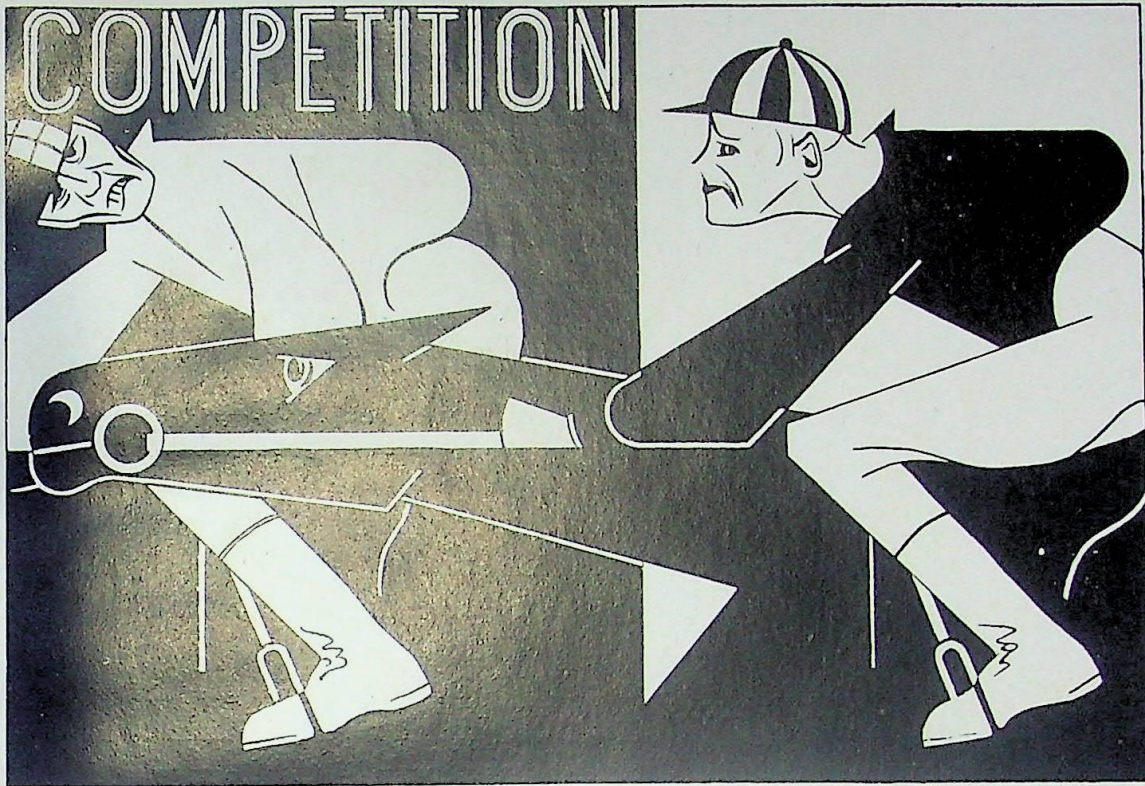
## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

*15,000,000 are feeble-minded . . . . . Professor Giddings of Columbia, a most sane thinker, has made the remark that sixty per cent. of the people of the United States were morons.' " \**

Such are some of the results of defying the laws of our being. But there is an equivalent compensatory action in life. Face life with courage and the true spirit of dare-devil, and she responds generously. But even if life did not respond, we owe it to ourselves to possess our senses and our minds whole, and to face life out with these, for better or for worse. But the modern age shows a false spirit of dare-devil ; daring only the physical elements without (and in so doing, daring also their as yet undiscovered natural bases within), to the ultimate destruction of the individual ; instead of daring the psychological devils of its own making, among which one of the most ruinously destructive is Speed.

*\* Stand to Your Work, by W. Eric Harris, Musson Book Co., Ltd., Toronto, Canada.*





"THE WILD RACE FOR PLACE, MONEY AND POWER"

I HAVE often wondered what the world would be like if suddenly, quite suddenly, every advertisement of every sort could be taken out of it. We have become so accustomed to having our lives befogged by advertisement that we lose sight of the fact that the Competition which advertisement implies, is not an essential of human existence.

It is curious to note how little one understands or desires the essentials of life.

We are born into the morass of competitive existence. We choke, splutter and struggle in it, and we call that "life".

Competition breeds dishonesty. As the cost of advertisement goes up, the quality of the goods usually goes down—to help to foot the advertisement bill. Competition breeds bitterness and heart-break. Who has not seen this in the business, artistic, literary, academic or scientific worlds? What a travesty of commerce,



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

beauty, wisdom and knowledge! Is it any wonder that people grow cynical, morbid, careless and desperate?

Those who are keenly aware of the morass are none the less affected by it; for we live by and through one another, and we cannot, even if we would, altogether escape the mistakes and follies of our fellows.

*"I enjoy the advertisements as much as the rest of the paper."* Yes, but look deeper! If there were no need for the advertisements, there might be something more enjoyable in the body of the paper. (Sorry, Editors! I know your troubles!) Talent and genius are everywhere focussed upon the wild race for Place, Money, Power; the energy which is expended in this race should be centred on the vital and really exciting quests of life itself.

"But life itself *IS* the quest for Place—Money—Power!"

*"Is it?"*

For us Westerns, at the end of life, the place of the undertaker in the race for place among all his fellow-undertakers, will not affect our condition. We shall have to apply to a Firm which is run on other principles. (For in the West, we have even commercialised death.)

Even if this our life is all, we get the worst out of it by letting the advertiser and the spirit of Competition run it for us.

World-markets! Why do people spoil their enjoyment of life (which cannot be bought or sold) by concentrating on distant markets? From world-markets to world-wars is but one step. Competition is a Plague that wears us out, stretching and distorting our faculties of mind and body. People say: "We have to accept things as they are. We can't alter world-trade, and world-wars will come or go, and anyway, all these things are beyond our control." But if a few saints find the way out, in them, at least, is a *real* advertisement of the real goods. We can do it too. The great have always re-discovered that the local way is the vital way; which means, that it behoves not man to stretch himself forth to acquire far fields until or unless he has truly acquired those which are close at hand.

Few nowadays can live, or dare to live, locally. Few dare to live deep instead of far. If one attempts this, the ghastly morass



## COMPETITION

of competitive life begins to sink below the level of one's normal consciousness, and one finds breathable air. One finds a life centred on simple essentials, so well worth living, that one naturally wants to spread the news of it to the morass-bound.

Curiously enough, by living deep and eschewing the competitive spirit—by cultivating a state of want-less-ness—one learns to be discerning and becomes truly cultured; one becomes a patron and helper of all that is genuine and expert and beautiful.

By the method of Competition in all fields, the crudest, the noisiest, the least worthy (judging by essentials) get to the top. Scum rises, in fact. But by the method of the culture of want-less-ness, the Good, the Beautiful and the True begin to emerge, not only in oneself, but also in all one's relations to life.

The competitive spirit is an inhuman thing, born of Grab. It is not merely a two-headed monster: it is hydra-headed. Those who are struggling in the morass, or wallowing in it, mistake these heads for desirable objects. We train our children to ambition some monstrous head, replacing desire for happiness based on a clear, pure heart, by desire for power in all its forms. We applaud the child who strives to be top of the form, of the house, of the school. A sensitive genius, a dreamer of true dreams, may be among the boys at the bottom of the class. Dare we say that his ambition is not worth having? Rarely does genius evince the competitive spirit; for genius is concentrated upon some essential thing, and Grab is not essential to the soul of man.

Competition destroys unity of team work and creates false standards of individuality, thereby creating artificiality, which distorts our conception of true values.

In trials of strength team must of course fight against team. A good fight, a hard struggle, need not, however, necessarily involve Competition. The fighting spirit is more than ever needed nowadays, to conquer the competitive spirit.

I am amazed when people tell me that these ideas are "all very well, but we have to get down to practical things; life has to be lived," etc. I can see nothing more practical and essential than



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

that we, singly and as a whole, should discover what is real and what false in the things by which we are surrounded. We are suffering because of this lack of perception and understanding, and this lack of doing the daily, hourly actions based upon perception and understanding.

Equally preposterous is the idea: "Well it can't be helped. You and I can do nothing." One Hitler can do much. We may not agree with him; but the point is, that all great changes in the masses start from *one*. The average individual, however, is normally not concerned with "movements." He is concerned to be happy in his immediate circle, and only secondarily with "movements" as they affect that circle. The modern mass-movement is only an eruption of the diseased body-social. Were humanity living normally, "movements" would cease. Everything comes back to the reactions of the individual. Mass movements in which the importance of those reactions is not stressed, will crumble.

To-day, it is a hard fight to keep one's reactions true. For one is always in or near to the morass of screaming, struggling, grasping, blinded, mad people; or hopeless starving, dull, witless, befooled, wretched people. One may be, or may have for a "living" to be, one of them. (It should be called a "dying", not "living"). What do? Unless one is among the hopeless and starving crowd—*live and judge and decide, from moment to moment*. The "good and faithful servant" who is utterly true and faithful over the daily little decisions, little trials of conscience and of judgment, is at last made "lord of many". Attitude cannot fail to alter life. That is the only hope, for those who are struggling "for a living" in the morass of the modern Plague of Competition.

"But if we don't 'shriek' our wares, we cannot sell our goods. We starve." If there must be shrieking, then we must shriek. It is obviously our duty at times to do so. But these words of mine are not directed to the victims of a system. They are for all who may in greater or lesser degree, cease to advertise and to market their goods (of one kind or another) because those goods are false; the making of them is unnecessary; the sale of them is a betrayal of



## COMPETITION

trust ; the manufacture of them is precious life of man—wasted.

If all who could cease creating and maintaining markets for false wares, useless manufactures, would do so, even in some degree, without fuss and without anarchy in any form, the millennium would come.

There is no possibility of happiness for mankind until life by competition ceases, and life by co-operation takes its place. There is no need, however, to talk of co-operation. Life by co-operation is the social law. All the rest is anarchy.

We are living amid world-anarchy.

We have no right to have "wants," but only "needs." All which is competitive springs from "wanting." Here lies the curse with which humanity has cursed itself—the hideous Spell it has put upon itself. No outside God or Saviour can break this Spell. It must be broken within each separate heart. This can only come through pain of confusion, of the cross-currents of the grasping, torturing, slaughtering, pitiless millions who have set themselves upon the wrong path and turned the good earth to hell. Pain of all this breaks the Spell of false wants, and turns the heart towards its own true needs. The misery suffered to-day under the competitive system is the key which will at last open the way to spontaneous co-operation. I say "spontaneous," for if we begin to organise co-operation, we will again substitute unreality for reality. An ideal cannot be organised. It either is, or is not, in the heart, and it operates by its own way alone—by intuition, spontaneously.

I would again stress the thought with which I began. We have allowed this Plague to take such a hold upon us that we accept its ravages as inevitable or even desirable. The human Spirit has been dimmed by it. We are, in fact, scarcely human. Is it really necessary that there should be bloody revolutions in order that we may be rid of this scourge? Is it necessary to become Bolshevik or Fascist, to leave or join a Church, to join or to fight a movement? By becoming utterly non-competitive within ourselves, by racing for the ultimate things, by struggling with the monsters of darkness within ourselves,



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

we can put an end to competitive strife and make a beginning of real culture in our own immediate circles.

If a stone is dropped into a pool, no rings appear at the circumference until the waters near the stone have moved. How else, then, shall we act to bring peace, but by individual effort?

If we cease to compete, co-operation is. An American doctor once said to me, of a piece of art-work (therapy by sound):—"O my! I know how you do it! You just *let*." Let us "just let" co-operation take the field. It means giving up many things which before may have seemed precious. But here, at least, the goods are worth the price.





"WHEN APPEARANCES COME IN. BEAUTY IS BARRED OUT"

WHEN humanity cursed itself with the fruits of its follies, no heavier Plague was sent upon it than that of "keeping up Appearances". Only the poor are in part exempt from this Plague, but even they, in ways unknown to those of greater estate, catch and transmit the insufferable scourge. For the sake of "Appearances" in India, for instance, poor folk ruin themselves on marriage and other ceremonies carried out on a scale which is absolutely scandalous, when one considers their very meagre resources. Indeed, these expenses are scandalous, however one considers them. I recently met a poor old *mangi* of Srinagar, who was living with his wife and youngest son in greatest poverty. I found out that he had owned a large houseboat, and having borrowed Rs. 100 for the marriage of his daughter, he was paying at the rate of Rs. 3 per month interest on this. He got into arrears—this, also, was caused by the marriage—and defaulted on one month's interest; whereupon the lender seized and kept his houseboat and ruined him and his family. As a



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

consequence of this, his two sons are unable to marry. The boat was their little all. This is but one instance out of millions. All this misery, for "Appearances"!

In London (where we are supposed to know better than the Srinagar *mangis*), many a woman lives more or less on buns and tea, in order to buy the smart clothes which are necessary for keeping pace with her "set". She half starves, to win and keep this worthless prize.

Family life is often embittered, and young lives are wrecked, by the absurd ideas which parents and teachers drive into their children's heads about Appearances at school and college; about religious Appearances; about keeping a high standard in examinations; about worldly marriages; about "family" and "money"; about jobs with fat emoluments; about the proper lucrative kinds of religious belief; about social climbing, and so on.

What can these things matter, if weighed in the balance with real values?

However, nobody troubles about real values when the question of "keeping up Appearances" crops up. Everything is forgotten except the effort to seem to be something which one is not. What a curse of untruth! What a depth of indifference as to the objects of life! What thoroughly vulgar degradation, no matter in whom found!

It is useless to pretend to cultivate ideals until this thing is dragged into the light and looked at unflinchingly, and cast aside for the rubbish that it is.

It takes much courage to go against the environment created by the millions who follow Appearances. There is something diabolical in their belief that Appearances in themselves constitute a sacred heritage and trust. It is the raving of disordered beings in the grip of a Plague. Yet we find this trait on all sides. All over the world, among all classes, people pride themselves on the "face" they keep to the world, and will sacrifice the priceless gifts of life—nay, even life itself—for ephemeral externals.

The other day I went to call on a certain family of retired



## APPEARANCES

official folk. The family was about to depart for a little social function in the neighbourhood. I went on a somewhat important errand, and they knew it. But so distracted were they by their smart car, their latest-cut clothes, their best *saris* and coats and jewels, that it was as if they were dead to all else. The words which they knew I had come to say, froze upon my tongue. I knew that amid such a welter of artificialities no true or important thing had a chance. True and important things are killed amid the myriad idiotic social functions of this class, which are just a means to enable them to prance before one another, for worldly ends, and strut and amble, in their absurd and often hideous finery. For when Appearances come in, Beauty is barred out.

People do not see how they impress a disinterested onlooker.

Many a young man's life and career are blasted by the incessant demand of his womenfolk for Appearances. Women, as long as this greed is rampant in them for what they shall put upon their bodies and what they shall grab or grasp for their children and what they shall achieve socially, should be kept strictly in subjection.

The greed-force is worse in the female than in the male. Most male deeds of violence are indirectly prompted by the female. She is too clever to do it directly. Besides, she must keep up the sham, the Appearance, of being gentle, submissive and compassionate; whereas most females have a tigerish quality at heart, which has contributed largely to making civilisation the curse that it is. It is, therefore, urgently important, if one is a true feminist—that is, believing in the emancipation of women—to commence by agitating for the emancipation of the female throughout society, from her ancestral heritages—greed, vanity, Appearances. Without this emancipation, man remains enslaved. This slavery is promulgated through sex-allurement, which the woman uses to get what she wants. Its subtle poisons penetrate into almost every corner of life; and many a family, the outward semblance of which is highly virtuous and respectable, is, in the private lives of its members, nothing but a nasty game in which the women offer themselves in



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

temptation to the men (prostitution) for what they can make the men do, in business, in politics, in their professional careers, to get more money, higher positions, more power, to satisfy female vanity and lust. Insofar as Churches and religions bless and sanctify this degrading business, under the guise of "holy matrimony," they, too, follow Appearances.

Until women overcome this in themselves, and become clean in heart and simple, there can be no true love in home life, no true splendour in social life, and no peace in the world. The women hold most of the keys.

Appearances often prevail in might over the simple and the true, weaken the influence of the great, defeat the purposes of the wise. Those who are embroiled in them sneer at all who do not go their way. For allied to sham is mockery—the mockery which kills the saints and crucifies the lovers. Brother to sham, also, is hypocrisy—the shamming, not of the body, but of the soul.

Many have reduced themselves to a state in which they pretend to have higher leanings, in order to supplement the hollowness of their shamming exteriors. This is sham battenning upon sham, whilst the spirit of man is enchained in the midst.

If anyone dares to try to be true, inwardly and outwardly, amid society as constituted in all lands to-day, he is usually suspected of knavery, of ulterior motive. For those who live in the "shadow of Appearances" lose the power to see straight.

*How long, O Lord—how long?*



## STANDARDISATION

IT is impossible to organise life. We do not know what life is. How can we organise that which we do not know? All we can say is that there is a mysterious something which we call "life". It comes and it goes. Little indeed can we control it.

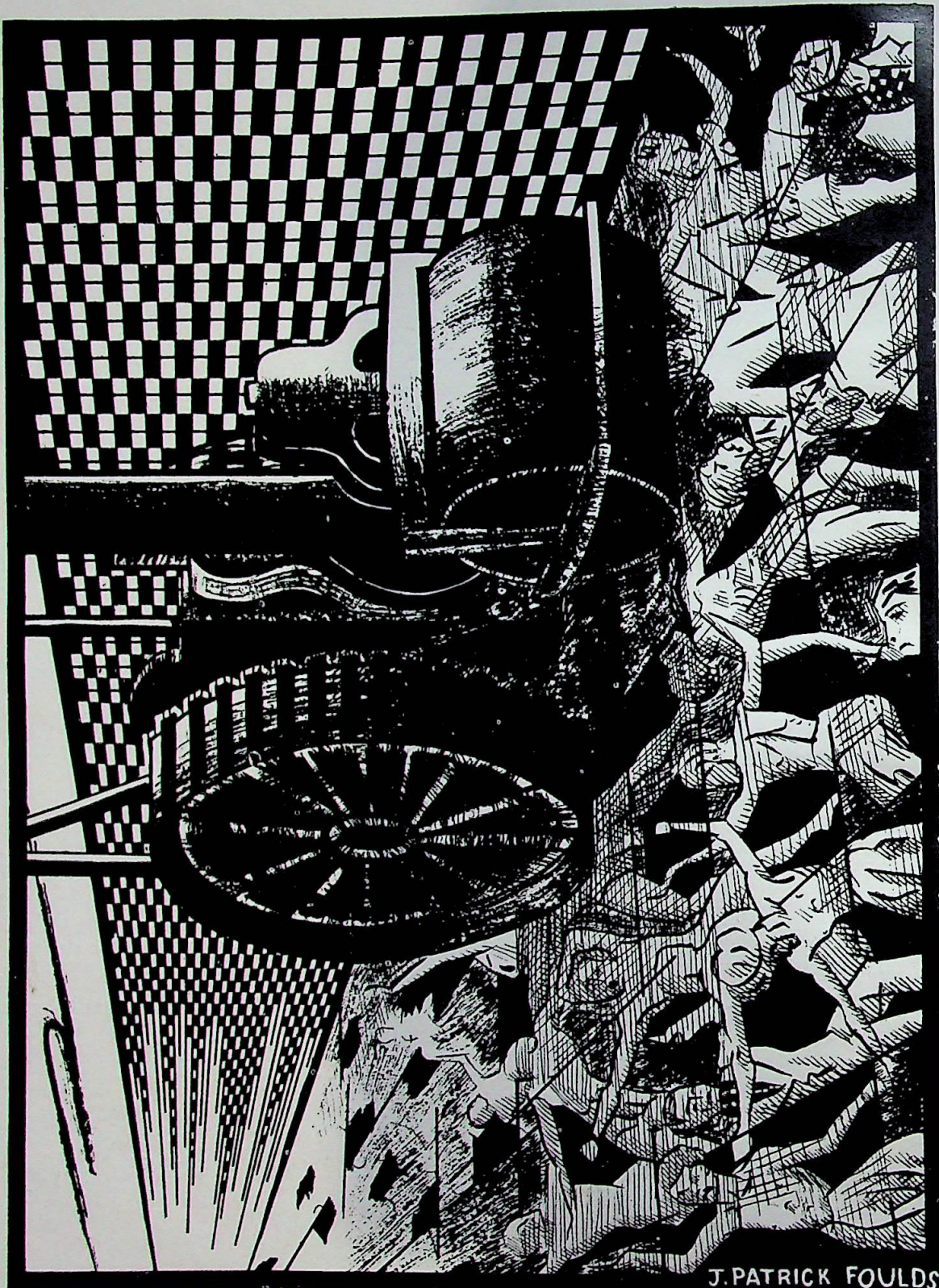
It is possible, however, to organise action. Broadly speaking, our actions may be organised either to imprison this mysterious thing we call life, or to liberate it.

It would seem proper that sane people should organise their activities towards the freeing of life. Yet if we look around us, we find that in almost every direction, mankind has organised its activities to imprison, entangle and frustrate life. At the height of man's civilisations we find the deepest entanglements, and in the vanguard of his progress, the greatest life-less-ness.

It will be admitted that the cultivation of a state of life-less-ness is a mistake; yet we continue in the Paths of Progress which are strewn with the life-less. We accept as inevitable the onward march of an invading army far more death-dealing than that of any conquering Imperialist. We bow to Things-As-They-Are. This stupor is caused by the Plague of Standardisation. Let us consider it.

What is life-less-ness? By this I mean an uncreative state—a condition in which the mind does not scintillate with vivid and clear thought; in which the intuitive nature is deadened; in which the power to thrill to beauty in nature and in the souls of our fellows, has forsaken us, and in which moral courage is unknown. It is a state of feeling old, dull; when small things do not please, and great things fatigue; when the enthusiasm for Truth is dead or dying. Millions and millions are in this state to-day, all over the world. Unfortunately, not only those whom starvation forces into it, but





J. PATRICK FOULDS

"THE PATHS OF PROGRESS ARE STREWN WITH THE LIFE-LESS"



## STANDARDISATION

those also—and especially—who feed well and who over-feed. The worst of it is, that they do not, in most cases, recognise it for what it is—life-less-ness.

“Employment for all,” and similar palliatives, will not solve the problem of life-less-ness. They will not free this dynamic Thing which is in captivity to our civilisation. People agitate for amelioration of the conditions of the masses; but it appears to me that the bulk of the agitators do not see that *conditions will never be ameliorated until there arises right understanding in the masses about the organisation of activity*. For without right understanding there can be no right action. What is the use of bringing them out of one starvation into another? Uncontrolled mass-production kills as surely as does lack of bread. Standardisation is a blight. The cult called Efficiency destroys human minds.

We have to know the possibilities of the human mind which is destroyed by the cult of Efficiency. Unfortunately most people have no conception of the nature of the mind, and its destiny.

If the people agitated culturally instead of politically, there would be little need for political agitation. Much of political agitation is energy wasted. Some is necessary; but great discernment is needed to prevent this waste of energy, which waste is desired by exploiters, and suits their purpose.

I was once on a mountain looking over a vast valley. I saw a caravan in the distance slowly coming up the winding road. After a while I looked again. The caravan had disappeared. Some days after, I was returning to the plains, and I saw a tangled mass of wreckage in a ravine some distance off the main road. I was told that the caravan had taken a wrong road, hoping to gain the summit of the pass more quickly, and had thus met with disaster. I could not help likening this caravan to Modern Progress, which is always going off the safe winding path of the mountain of life, to find short ways to health, wealth, pleasure and—forgetfulness.

By “forgetfulness” I here mean: being unable to discern what is valuable and what valueless in life; being indifferent to the urge of true natural instincts in these our physical bodies, which



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

even amid the chaos in which we now find ourselves, still have power to point us back to the state of trueness to nature, of simplicity, of hardihood and of noble urges, from which state practically the whole human race has fallen. Within each man lies the whole of Truth, and a guiding voice to teach him the true organisation of his actions.

Modern organisation, standardisation, "efficiency", over-specialisation, stardom, institutionalism, are nearly all symptoms of social disease. We are, insofar as we blindly accept these things, in some degree insane. Only those human institutions which will stand the stringent tests of intuition-illuminated intelligence, are worthy to be included in our social structure.

How cure modern insanities? We must regard the cure, not from the viewpoint of society as a whole, but from the angle of the individual. Society has no existence apart from its component individuals. But we find that nowadays it is rare to meet such a miracle as the truly individualised man. We have so organised, pounded, shaped, standardised, hewn, cultivated, driven and led man, that we have nearly succeeded in blotting out the one attribute that makes him human and that makes for social stability—the individuality and its uniqueness.

"If the majority of men were individually sane," writes Bertrand Russell, "they would soon make an end of the collective insanities which threaten our civilisation. But it is difficult to see how individual sanity is to be brought about in the countries whose Governments depend for their existence upon its absence."

Nine-tenths of the organising of which we are so proud, is—judged by its fruits—deadening, life-taking, pernicious. Any form of activity which mars life is obviously something to be eschewed by social workers. Yet many sincere social workers are content to go on contributing to the enslavement of man, by perpetuating the narrow institutional methods that have helped to kill creativity, spontaneous intelligence, moral acumen, courage and initiative and power to act alone, in the human race.

Organisation is discipline. There is discipline good and



## STANDARDISATION

bad. Any discipline by the imposition of which man is made less than himself, is to be scrapped, if the human race is to survive, and a true civilisation to be built up. But scrapping cannot be done wholesale, arbitrarily, thoughtlessly. That is anarchy. The anarchist destroys but does not build. What is needed is passionately sincere building, giving no attention to destructive methods at all. If there were enough passionately sincere builders of men in the world to-day—building themselves and their families or immediate groups—there would be certainty of the emancipation of civilisation from its present chaos. It boils down to “you” and “me”. It is not a universal matter. It is a personal matter.

Another dangerous aspect of our insanity is stardom, whether of Dictator or Screen. It is an aspect of specialisation, standardisation, which threatens ruin wherever it is found. A. J. Pentty sums it up quaintly in his precious little pioneer book on Guilds revival, *Old Worlds for New*: “The principle” (of specialisation) “has been applied first to this and then to that, until in one way or another nearly all of us are enslaved, and everywhere we find that men tend to become increasingly specialised along the lines of one single groove. The corruption has reached the professions, which is the beginning of the end; for when specialisation is complete, the co-ordinating mind which is essential to join the specialists together will be no longer available!”

Organisation is not, however, intrinsically bad. Man has made it so, by standardising it to serve greed. Nature disciplines and organises. She evinces series and repetitions, intelligence and forethought. Lately I read of a boa-constrictor who swallowed a hog. When, after some days, the snake's body was opened, it was found that nature had made provision for the swallowing of sharp-edged objects by pythons. The hoof of the wild boar is deadly, a weapon of almost razor-like sharpness. Had nature not protected the python, the four hoofs found inside this one would



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

have cut its intestine to pieces. But the hoofs were each encased in balls of hair of "perfect roundness and almost machine-like appearance!" The cloven hoofs were embedded so firmly in these hair-balls, which were "the size of tennis balls but much harder", that, they had to be dug out. (Quotations are from *Wild Cargo* by Frank Buck with Edward Anthony.) That is spontaneous organisation. That is efficiency for protection but not for exploitation. That is natural forethought, creative discipline.

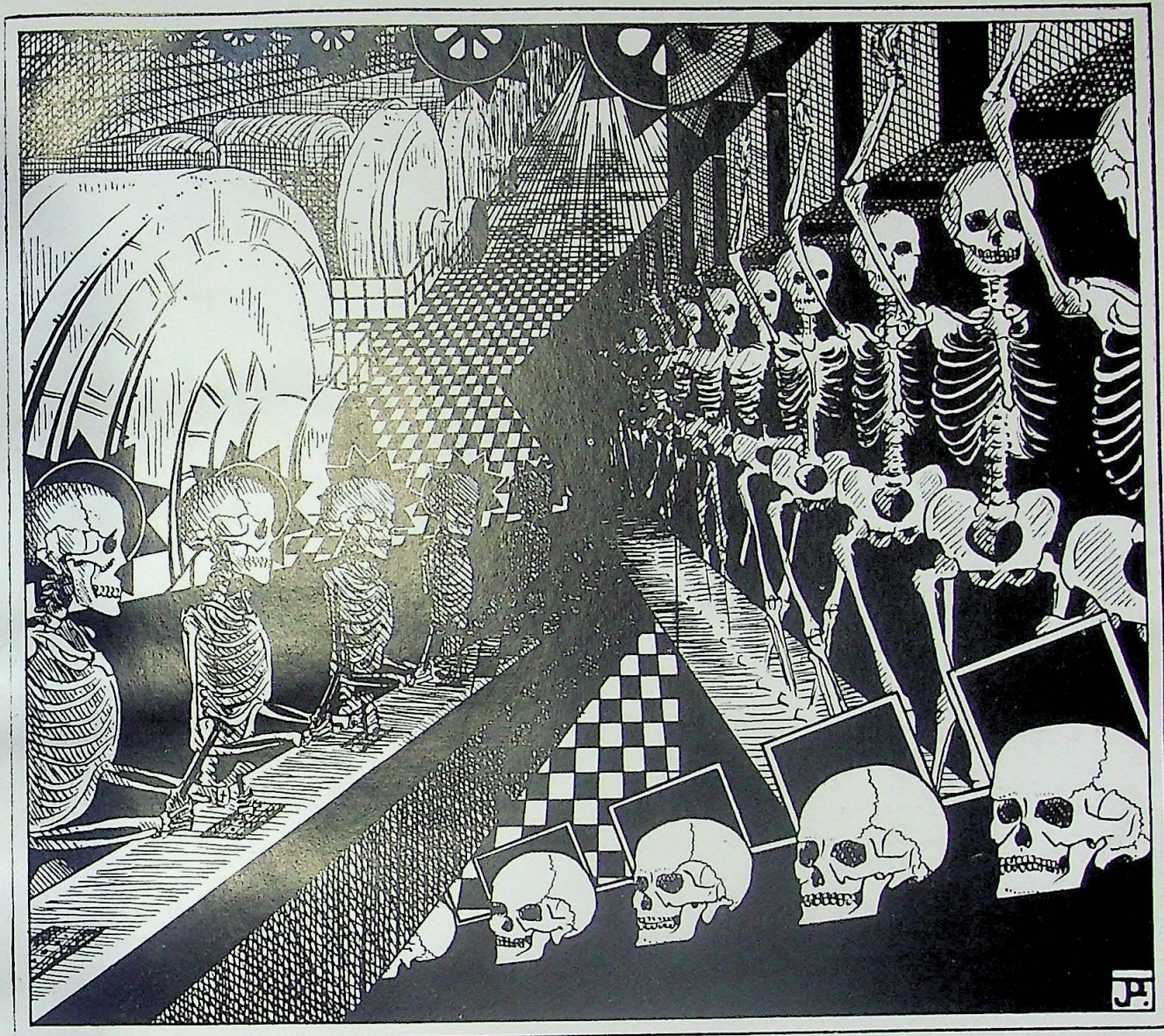
Unfortunately we do not find our children adapted by their schooling to ~~the~~ basic instincts and urges of life; nor do we find the workers adapted to protection from cold and heat and hunger and sickness and physical and psychological deadness, by their offices and factories; nor the religious folk adapted to realisation of life's deepest mysteries and imparting the hunger for them to others, by their mosques and temples, synagogues and churches; nor the social workers strengthened in love and grace and power and healing, by their houses and hospitals and institutions. In short, we have made of Efficiency a curse.

Humanity, in the organisation of its own affairs, has not yet displayed the sense of the stomach of a boa-constrictor! It seems to me that we are constrained, if indeed there is to be any hope for the future, at least to re-become level with the stomach of the boa-constrictor in alertness, foresight, adaptability, and creativeness, before we can make a fresh start in the right direction. To do this, we have to become intelligently simple.

The future of politics, of education and of industrial reconstruction lies with each one of us in our individual reactions to the affairs of everyday life. Our complacency, by allowing ourselves to participate directly or indirectly in that which is death-dealing to the race, is one of the biggest social crimes we have to fight. What we allow to be done to our children by false methods of education, we are permitting to all the children of the world.

The same holds good for our attitude towards the products of industry. The "industrial situation" could not exist if each individual industrial- or trades-organiser and consumer acted with





"WE MANUFACTURE EVERYTHING THERE BUT MEN. TO BRIGHTEN, TO STRENGTHEN, TO  
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## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

a sense of social responsibility. *Weaponless militant culturalism is the only panacea for a civilisation which is sick with artificial standards of action, covered with the sores caused by the standardised, the efficient, the specialised and the drilled.*

Gandhi's ideal of non-violent Government will triumph; but before this can happen, every kind of compromise will have been tried—and will have failed, not only in India, but throughout the world. Violence must fail, because, as Professor Huxley, the agnostic man of science, demonstrated in his renowned Gifford lectures half a century ago, the survival of the fittest, by the law of "might is right," may be a law of the lower kingdoms of nature, but the law of the human kingdom does not work that way. Huxley could not explain the fact he had to admit.

Since Huxley's days, when evolution by the survival of the fittest was regarded as a law complete unto itself, science has gone far. It was, I believe, Prince Kropatkin in his work *Mutual Aid* who cast the first serious doubts upon the generally accepted "law" of the survival of the fittest, in the sense that might is right.

What, however, is the spectacle we meet in these days of supposed Government by Democracy? Violence, restriction, intimidation. Here is another picture from that supposed paragon of democratised, standardised lands—America: "In a country which has prided itself, ever since its declaration of independence, as one standing for liberty and equality, there is so much legislative and social restriction that the liberty of the individual is becoming a fast diminishing quantity . . . . Legislative enactments are being made in several States against the doctrine of evolution; the sale of cigarettes is against the law in some States . . . . legislation is passed as to what shall, and shall not, appear in histories at schools; everyone who has a hobby cries loud and long to place some further restriction upon the burdened shoulders of his fellow-citizens."

"The Government at Washington and at the State capitals, to an amazing extent, is in the hands of class-legislators. Groups want this, and other groups want that, not because it is good for



## STANDARDISATION

the country, but because it is of use to themselves . . . . The late President Woodrow Wilson wrote: 'All our activities are in the hands of a few men who chill and check and destroy genuine economic freedom. We have come to be one of the worst-ruled, one of the most completely controlled and dominated Governments in the civilised world—a Government by the opinions and duress of small groups of dominant men.'"

" . . . Is there justice in Chicago, when in one year there were 336 murders and where only 44 convictions were registered; where murder trials have become little more than sentimental news, where criminals are protected by a code of technicalities and precedents . . . ?"

"The Corporations controlling 'big business' enjoy almost total immunity to carry cases from court to court, year after year, until their smaller opponents are worn out with the delays and the expense."

"In many places individual protection and safety cannot be guaranteed, and there is an almost total breakdown of law and order. In Illinois, only the other day, rival gangs of bootleggers, using machine-guns and armoured-cars, battled with each other to the death, their leaders even giving out "communiques" to the press as to the course of the battle and as to their plans for future fights. In most of the larger cities of the land, money and pay-rolls must be moved in armoured cars to protect it from the daylight raids of bandits against whom the police seem powerless. It is dangerous, in places, to use a public taxi at night, and in many places, too, one cannot be sure of protection even from the uniformed police themselves, the appointees and disciples, as they are, of partisan machines. In their failure to insist upon a rigid observance . . . . they have created conditions of disorder which are unparalleled in the civilised world . . . . Radio, automobile and moving picture occupy all the time of the average American which is not occupied with work or in sleeping. The very practicability of other and better forms of entertainment is forgotten. Conversation is not only an art of the past, but the



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

apt and delightful practice of it now is considered as 'high-brow' or 'swanky' and brings into play the whole scope of those forces which make for social standardisation." (W. Eric Harris in *Stand to your Work*.)

Speeding up and the division of labour, have been magnificently pictured by Ruskin:—"We have much studied and much perfected of late the great civilised invention of the division of labour: only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour which is divided, but the men—divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail. Now, it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins a day; but if we could only see with what crystal sands their points were polished—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discerned for what it is—we should think that there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this—that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery: but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living Spirit never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: not by teaching or preaching, for to teach them is but to show them their misery, and to preach to them, if we do nothing more than preach, is to mock at it. It can be met only by a right understanding on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them and making them happy; by determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman, and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour."

It is of no use crying out against such things as Standardisation whilst we ourselves submit to them. That is slave mentality. The



## STANDARDISATION

case of many workers in offices and factories is different. They are helpless. Those who are outside these prisons can help, by refusing to make more, or, insofar as lies in their power, to use the products of these modern death-traps. (By this I do not condemn the factory and office, but the system under which most of them are run.)

One of the greatest scientists of America is showing on biological and physiological grounds that our race is destroying itself under the present system of standardised education, labour and trade. In his epoch-making book *Man the Unknown*, Dr. Alexis Carrel declares:—"We now have to re-establish in the fullness of his personality, the human being weakened and standardised by modern life . . . . Instead of resembling a machine produced in series, man should, on the contrary, emphasise his uniqueness. *In order to reconstruct personality, we must break the frame of the school, factory, and office, and reject the very principles of technological civilisation.*" (*Italics mine. T.*)

"Like the school, the factory and the office are not intangible institutions. There have been, in the past, industrial organisations" (the Guilds) "which enabled the workmen to own a house and land, to work at home when and as they willed, to use their intelligence, to manufacture entire objects, to have the joy of creation. *At the present time this form of industry could be resumed.\** Electrical power and modern machinery make it possible for the light industries to free themselves from the curse of the factory. Could not the heavy industries also be decentralised? Or would it not be possible to use all the young men of the country in the factories for a short period, just as for military service? In this or another way the proletariat could be progressively abolished. Men would live in small communities instead of in immense droves. Each would preserve his human value within his group. Instead of being merely a piece of machinery, he would become a person. To-day the position of the proletarian is as low as was that of the feudal serf. Like the serf, he has no hope of escaping from his bondage,

\* *Italics mine.* See suggestions for the revival of Guilds in my book: *The National Organisation of Crafts and Industries.*



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

of being independent, of holding authority over others . . .” “The white-collar people lose their personality just as factory hands do. In fact, they become proletarians. It seems that modern business organisation and mass production are incompatible with the full development of the human self. If such is the case, *then industrial civilisation, and not civilised man, must go.*” (*Italics mine. T.*)

“ . . . Happiness depends on one being exactly fitted to the nature of one's work. And there are many varied tasks in a modern nation. Human types, instead of being standardised, should be diversified, and these constitutional differences maintained and exaggerated by the mode of education and the habits of life. Each type would find its place . . . . Ill-assorted types are herded together according to their financial position and not in conformity with their individual characteristics. Obviously, they have nothing in common. The best, those who could grow, who try to develop their mental potentialities, are atrophied by the narrowness of their life. In order to promote human progress, it is not enough to hire architects, to buy bricks and steel, and to build schools, universities, laboratories, libraries, art institutes, and churches. . . . ”

“The brutal materialism of our civilisation not only opposes the soaring of intelligence, but also crushes the affective, the gentle, the weak, the lonely, those who love beauty, who look for other things than money, whose sensibility does not stand the struggle of modern life . . . . ”

“ . . . Modern society should not hesitate to organise itself with reference to the normal individual. Philosophical systems and sentimental prejudices must give way before such a necessity. The development of human personality is the ultimate purpose of civilisation.”

The attempt to standardise and systematise life without reference to the nature of man, has largely contributed to the downfall of the nations. Dr. Carrel writes:—

“The restoration of man to the harmony of his physiological and mental self will transform his universe . . . . ”

“The day has come to begin the work of our renovation.



## STANDARDISATION

We will not establish any programme. For a programme would stifle living reality in rigid armour . . . ”

“ . . . We must liberate ourselves from blind technology and grasp the complexity and the wealth of our own nature . . We are still . . . in a world that is not made for us, because it is born from an error of our reason and from the ignorance of our true self. To such a world we cannot become adapted. We will, then, revolt against it. We will transform its values and organise it with reference to our true needs. To-day, the science of man gives us the power to develop all the potentialities of our body. We know the secret mechanisms of our physiological and mental activities and the causes of our weakness. We know how we have transgressed natural laws. We know why we are punished, why we are lost in darkness. Nevertheless, we faintly perceive through the mists of dawn a path which may lead to our salvation.”

So much for the Prophets of England and America. What will be India's decision? Which path will she take?

Is it necessary for India to fall into line with the rest of the unhappy modern world, by standardising her millions?

From the standpoint of her cultures, the temperaments of her peoples, her history and geographical position, her magnificent and varied wealth of raw materials, the answer is : No!

From the height of her spiritual heritage and destiny as spiritual leader among the nations, her answer must always be : A thousand times, no!







"IF I EAT TOO MUCH, MY BROTHER WANTS"



## FEASTING AND FASTING

WHEN an organ is in health, one is not aware of it. A kind of unconsciousness is the mantle of happiness in all departments of life. If this be true, then the stomach is indeed a great Plague in our day. For who is not conscious of his stomach, much of the time? Some are conscious of it because it is too empty. Some are conscious of it because it is too full. Sir Henry Thompson, the great dietetician, originated the remark: "Most people die of over-eating." He lived in Europe. Had he been in India he might have said: "Most people die of under-eating."

Over-eating at one end means under-eating at the other end of the scale of human life. No matter what science may achieve—no matter what clever theories people may advance in support of the follies that have made us what we are—the fact remains that nature will always drive us into dis-ease, until we recognise that the over-abundance of any one man means the lack of necessities for another man. This is an unalterable law. This will apply, were those men separated even by all the seas. We may not be able to fathom the reason—we cannot, despite all our vaunted intellectual progress—but the fact remains that humanity is an indivisible whole. Anything which by grab or greed injures a unit, injures that whole. (The organisation of Capital *versus* Labour, therefore, is as unsatisfactory a solution of modern problems as is the organisation of Labour *versus* Capital. Hands and brains are inseparable. The one, indeed, may only be a branch of the other. We are not at all certain, in fact, that the brain ends at the head. The whole body is probably but the extended mechanism of the thinking apparatus.)

However—to get back to stomachs—there is a definite relation between the condition of our digestive systems and social



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

well- or ill-being.

If one man knocks another one down and grievously injures him, it is not to be expected that the injured one could heal his own wounds. If society knocks down those who are in a weak position, it is not to be expected that they will have the power to right themselves. Such is the state of affairs as between the over-fed and the under-fed. Yet not wholly : for in eating too much we also injure ourselves ; and there is not much to choose between the lack of intelligence which is due to starvation and that which is due to gluttony. The move to remove starvation should, however, come from the side of the feasters.

Most people are gluttons. It is a curious thing that the vice of over-sexuality is hidden away for the Plague-symptom that it is, whilst that of over-eating is encouraged and even publicly indulged. Alienists tell us that over-eating is one of the symptoms of insanity. I once asked a brain-specialist at whose nursing-home for borderline cases I was doing some curative work with sound-vibrations : "Why do you give your patients so much to eat?" Her answer was : "Because insanity nearly always brings about an enormous increase in the desire for food. We consider that many of these cases are due to sexual repressions and abnormalities. We find that if we give the patients a large quantity of 'tasty' food, they do not give us so much trouble over sex matters." These are disconcerting facts to face at meal time.

It would appear, therefore, that over-eating is due to pathological and psychological dis-ease. Sex-repression becomes inordinate desire for food. (This is to be distinguished from the desire for food which accompanies over-indulgence in sex and is nature's attempt to adjust the depletion caused by excess.)

When we attend social functions and participate in the general gorging, we are, then, simply displaying the extent of our repressed sex, or, on the other hand, of our depletion through over-indulgence. (Repressed sex cannot be got over by eating or by sex. It can only be got over by creative action. That is one reason why over-mechanised industry is a curse ; for in



## FEASTING AND FASTING

destroying creativity in man it increases bestiality).

There is another aspect of gluttony—women—the unintelligence of women. They stuff their children, their husbands and their relatives with foods and drinks in abundance, and look upon the doing of this as a virtue. Most women pander to the animality in their husbands and children—pander to it for the sake of what they can get from that pandering. This is the tendency in the average female. Women vie with their neighbours in the provision of delicacies in feeding. They do not know that they are by this doing the greatest harm to their families. So, from infancy, a habit of over-eating is induced in us, so that many of us over-eat in all innocence, believing that this excess is the normal quantity which is necessary for our sustenance. Our mothers have taught us this. Our mothers must be taught better.

If we have any doubts about what is necessary for sustenance, we have but to look at the average workers here in India, for instance, and see how much work they do, fairly intelligently, faithfully, and at times even most expertly, on their spare and what would be to us unappetising diet, and how much harder they are than we. As for the half-starved millions, speech fails before their sufferings and their toils.

The body requires very little food and no alcoholic drink for its maintenance in health and balance. The stomach (and by reaction, the entire body) is perpetually over-worked and worn out by our gluttonies indulged in from childhood and fostered by our misguided womenfolk. Women are even praised for catering to animalism. Thus low have we fallen!

A race of virile, creative, hardy men and women cannot be built out of Feasting or Fasting; but if one of the two had to be chosen, Fasting would take us farthest.

To get back to normal, we must deny ourselves this and that, until violated nature no longer demands over-indulgence, and morbid appetites die off. Having created evil habits, it is not easy to relinquish them. Gradual and steady abstinence will, however, restore equilibrium, and, in most cases, health.



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

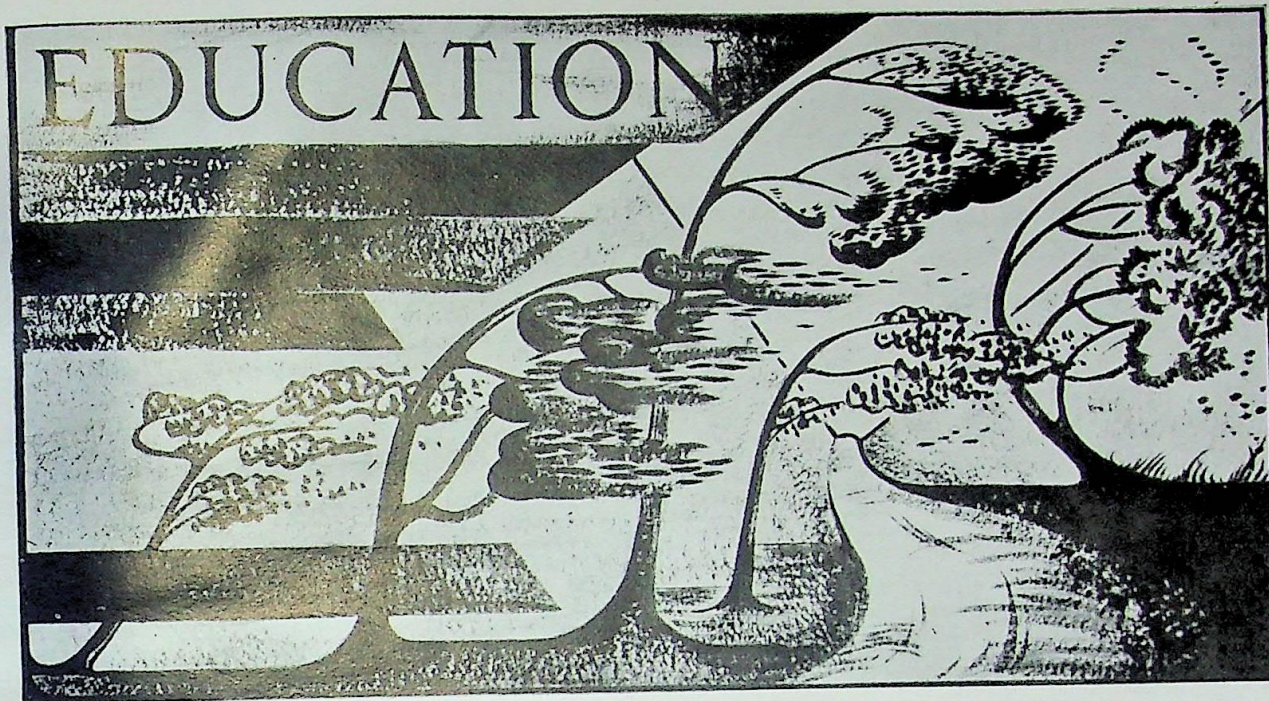
Whilst we learn to eat with moderation, we liberate in ourselves forces that make for the welfare of our fellows. We become factors for social adjustment, instead of clogs in the human machine.

He whose body is clogged by over-eating is also a clog on human society. Regard them, in their millions! Half-conscious, brutalised, non-human! Regard, also, the fruits of those dietetic indiscretions—tempers, sicknesses, hospitals, doctors, quacks, drug-stores, and a thousand allied follies and expensive remedies on the one hand, whilst the millions starve, on the other.

*If I eat too much, my brother wants.* By this thought alone, greed may be overcome. So closely are the habits of the physical body linked to those of the mind, that it is no exaggeration to say that in doing away with over-eating, we may at the same time also dispel many a delusion of the soul. The saints are practical men. They deny their stomachs, but fill their hearts.

That those who now fast by compulsion of circumstance, may eat, we who feast by compulsion of habit, should fast. Because the world to-day is mad, some few "fast unto death." If only for their stomachs' sakes, the many might well now adopt a "fast unto life."





" PLANKS OF WOOD BLOWING AGAINST THEM "

I WAS once watching a gale of wind blowing along a road, on the sides of which were small sweet trees planted to make a shady avenue in years to come. As I stood there, in the strong wind and dust, I noticed the saplings bending under the weight of the gale which was blowing straight down the road. I thought to myself: "If these little trees had planks of wood blowing across them instead of just the wind of heaven, they could not be more bent and broken than they are now." For indeed, most of them were breaking, and the good work of implanting and tending them had been set at nought in the ravaging of the gale of an hour. Branches were strewn everywhere, and by the time the wind had abated, there remained but an avenue of rather bare trunks, flanking that road. Alas for the shady avenue which had been well and truly planned! Even if ever they grew to maturity, these saplings would yield only vistas of bleak and shadeless growth. Travellers upon that road would look in vain to them for succour and refreshment upon the dusty way.



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

There was sadness in me, until, coming nearer, I saw that the planners of that avenue had foreseen some such trouble and had done what they could to avert it, relying upon the goodness and wealth of nature. For they had planted three avenues, each at different ages, so that there were younger trees to take the place of the injured ones. Indeed, there was every hope of the shady avenue being achieved, after all, in spite of occasional set-backs.

Now in the life of man this also is the case. Nature has made ample and abundant provision for repairing and replenishing the ravages of disease and accident. She has designed the human being for rapid adaptability; immense and sure unfoldings; miraculous powers of endurance and of development; grand reactions to pressures from within and without.

Man is the greatest miracle we know.

A railway booking-clerk; a stoker at a furnace; a picker-over of the refuse filth of an abattoir; a gentleman worker in the Admiralty (1932) *still sorting war-telegrams 1914—1918*; a lady of society doing her endless rounds of dressmakers and servants and dinner-orderings, and luncheons, teas, tennis, dinners, cards, dances—day after day, year after year; a little boy in a school rubbing out his slate and having his intelligence rubbed out, day after day, year after year—all these are human miracles, in spite of the fact that they are “civilised”, “cultured”, “up-to-date” and “progressive.”

Civilisation, culture and progress have made them what they are—wrecks upon the road of life—stumps of trees which should be the shady arbourage of the Spirit of God. These blighted beings who are ourselves and our fellows are all that Education has left of what was intended to be the greatest miracle on earth. Most of us do not even realise that we are blighted beings. The majority have not only fallen from their birthright: they have forgotten it.

A gale has swept over the souls of our children and blighted their lives. Education is this gale. It is the Plague of false culture to false ends. We know it. And yet—we allow it. Why do mothers and fathers who love their children submit to seeing those children bent and bruised and broken by Education as we practise



## EDUCATION

it by our highly civilised methods? It is because the parents themselves are, in the vast majority of cases, but stumps of trees, from a blighted childhood, when they beget their children to be destined for the same process. Parents have almost entirely lost the power to resist the educational system which blasts the lives of their children. They go further: they hug the death-dealing thing—the gale that kills. They place their little ones in the thick of it, with bags full of money to propitiate the Wind God, and say: “*We are fitting our children for life. We are giving our children every advantage. We are equipping our children to take their stand in the battle for existence. We are fitting our children to carry on, by means of academic honours, this Education and this system, into the generations to come. We are adding to the stability of society, the security of our class, the forward-march of the race.*”

Now all this is quite true, if the standards which we have set up are true. But some of us hold that nine out of ten of these are false—false to the core—criminally false—devastating to the race.

The race collects its experience and hands it on partly by means of Education. If that experience does not tally with sublime and natural Reality (scientific in the true and ultimate sense) then we hand down a curse. I again quote Dr. Alexis Carrel at some length, as he represents a large section of modern emancipated thinkers, scientific or otherwise:

“Men cannot follow civilisation along its present course because they are degenerating. They have been fascinated by the beauty of the sciences of inert matter. They have not understood that their body and consciousness are subjected to natural laws, more obscure than, but as inexorable as, the laws of the sidereal world. Neither have they understood that they cannot transgress these laws without being punished. They must, therefore, learn the necessary relations of the cosmic universe, of their fellow-men, and of their inner selves, and also those of their tissues, and their minds. Indeed, man stands above all things. Should he degenerate, the beauty of civilisation, and even the grandeur of the physical universe, would vanish . . . . We have gained the mastery of



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

almost everything which exists on the surface of the earth, excepting ourselves . . . . . Civilisation has created new stimuli against which we have no defence. Our organism tries in vain to adapt itself to the noises of the large cities and factories, to the agitation of modern life, the worries and the crowding of our days. We do not get used to lack of sleep. We are incapable of resisting hypnotic poisons, such as opium or cocaine. Strange to say, we adjust ourselves without suffering to most of these conditions. But such adjustment is far from being a victorious adaptation. It brings about organic and mental changes, which are equivalent to a degradation of civilised man."

"Irresponsible is the youth brought up in modern schools by teachers ignorant of the necessity for effort, for intellectual concentration, for moral discipline . . . . although many have strong muscles, they are deprived of nervous and moral resistance. They shrink from effort and privation"—this last applies mainly in the West—" . . . . like the offspring of the wretched and the criminals, they are unfit to have a place in the New City."

Again: "If scientific civilisation should leave the road that it has followed since the Renaissance and return to naïve observation of the concrete, strange events would immediately take place. Matter would lose its supremacy. Mental activities would become as important as physiological ones. The study of moral, aesthetic and religious functions would appear as indispensable as that of mathematics, physics and chemistry. The present methods of education would seem absurd."

"The making of man requires the development of institutions wherein body and mind can be formed according to mental laws, and not to the prejudices of the various schools of educators. *It is essential that the individual, from infancy, be liberated from the dogmas of industrial civilisation and the principles which are the very basis of modern society.*" (*Italics mine. T.*)



## EDUCATION

This—from Rockerfeller Institute, New York City!\*

There is a considerable concentration on new forms of Education in India to-day. It is to be hoped that efforts to institute vocational training, literacy, etc., will not prove ineffectual in the long run. Of what value, for instance, can vocational training for the masses be, except further to enslave, if with it there does not go that inspiration of apprenticeship to a noble and ancient craft, such as obtained in the relationship between the Guilds (*srenis*) crafts-masters and their sons or pupils in days of old? Smattering of crafts by ignorant teachers would be worse than useless; it would be the prostitution of all that the workers have held most sacred and dear for three thousand years. Yet that, it seems, is what is to be done. Such a teaching would be "out of the frying-pan into the fire", worse than semi-starvation, no better than the hideous modern industrial system from which some of India's leaders would now free the people. On the other hand, those who are against this modern interpretation of vocational training, seem, from the standpoint of vital education, equally futile. For the culture they laud is largely false. Gandhi has seen this. He has seen the need to train hands; but the move that is being made to carry out his idea is not bold enough and the organisers do not go deep enough. How can teachers who hear a few lectures, learn to spin and carpenter perhaps indifferently, and go through a crafts-collection or two, be fitted thereby to lead the people back to their ancient and eternal industrial heritage? Far better would it be for those would-be teachers to make pilgrimages to the workshops of the few remaining master-craftsmen throughout the country, to study Birdwood,† and to plant the seeds of a real industrial revolution in

\**Man—The Unknown*, by Dr. Alexis Carrel. This book has been translated into nine European languages. For the sake of those whose smattering of Western science has led them into blind alleys, it is to be hoped that this magnificent exposition of human destiny by a physiologist and biologist who is in the vanguard of scientific thought, will be translated into several Oriental languages, and will find its way into College and public Libraries throughout the East.

†*The Industrial Arts of India*, by George C. M. Birdwood, C.S.I., M.D. Chapman and Hall, London. Here was an Englishman with a truly Indian soul. If educationalists would



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

the souls of the children of India, by teaching them the culture that precedes great work, and the methods of the humble great work that follow upon that culture.

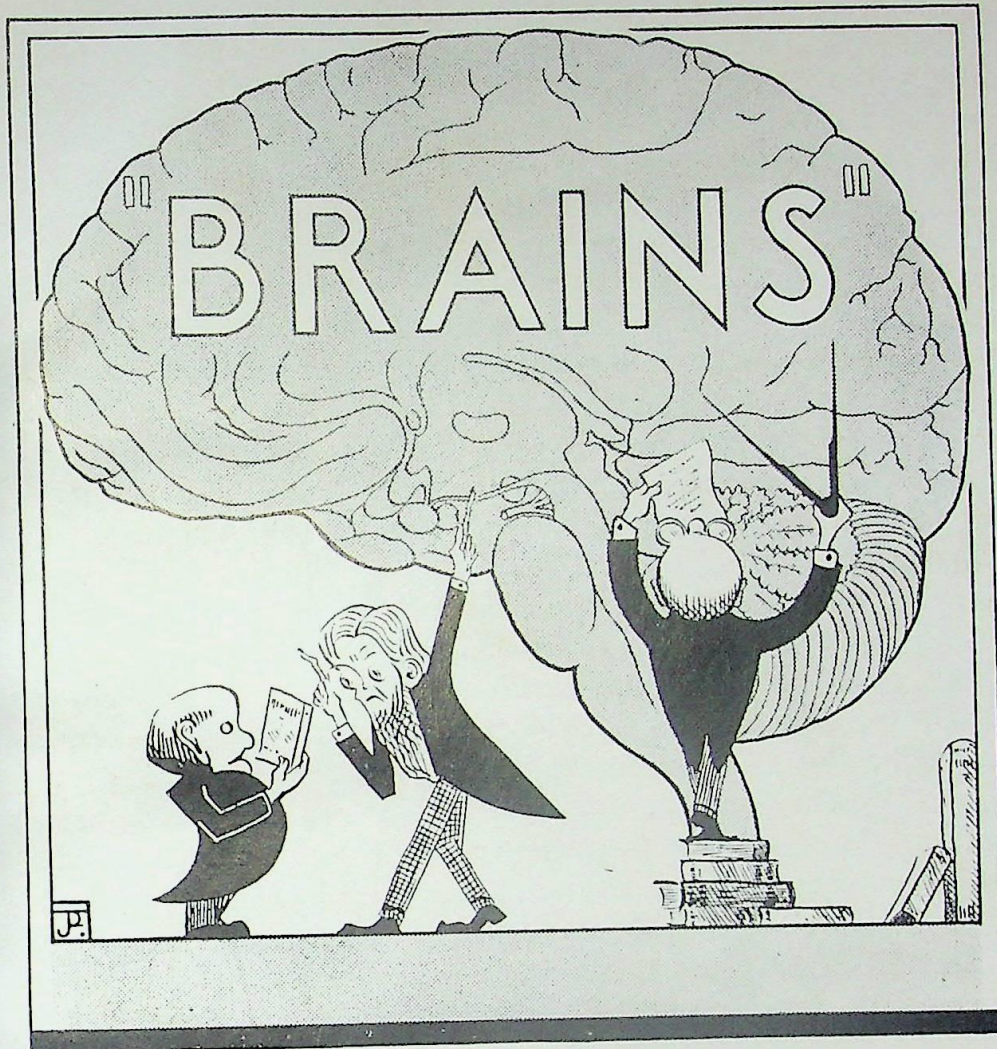
If we listen to our few Prophets, Eastern and Western, it is not impossible to save our children from the fate which awaits them. But it will require immense courage and fortitude, faith and daring, in the face of the conditions which we have made for ourselves. I say this last advisedly, for, ultimately, no one can force upon us that which we will not accept. The cry is for courage and ever more courage, to refuse to have our children maimed and twisted in school and college life. But before we can develop this immense moral courage, we have to make up our minds as to the aim of Education. If it is to make men, to hand on the miracle of humanity, then we must remember that seven-tenths of the present system unmakes man and the three remaining tenths are not worth wrecking our children for. If, however, we are satisfied with Life-As-It-Is, let us send our children to schools and colleges. Let us continue in this campaign of murder! Let us continue to wallow in this Plague of ignorance called Education! But if we do this, we have no right to condemn the fruits in civil and international warfare.

From East and from West, the greatest minds are showing a new way. It were better to study these Prophets humbly and to bear the consequences of our convictions, in giving our children far less Education, in seeing the lives of our children a lot less "successful" and a lot more miraculous.

We are here to unfold the miracle of man. Why don't we proceed to do it?

but try to discover the remnants of the great crafts in the long lists of Indian towns and their crafts as given by him, and bring them to life again, then surely foundations of vocational training would be well and truly laid.





"EDUCATIONALISTS HAVE NOT YET FOUND OUT  
THE WAY TO USE THE BRAIN."

THE most destructive things in the world to-day are "Brains". Perhaps this has always been so. Some occultist has said: "The mind is the destroyer of the Real"; and in the *yoga* aphorisms of Patanjali we find it declared that the first step in *yoga* (that is, the first step towards becoming a normal human) is "inhibiting the modifications of the thinking principle".

Every scripture, in one form or another, teaches us the same



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

thing. Yet most of us revel in these "modifications". We think we would be only half alive without them; whereas the truth is that we are wholly dead, living as we do, in bondage to them.

Unfortunately we cannot always put "brainy" people in jail (though of course some of the brainiest get there; for it needs more than ordinary intelligence to be a good criminal). The feeling is, I take it, that some kind of lethal chamber might at times be legitimate! . . . . But, seriously, if nine-tenths of the "brainy" people could be put to sleep, the world would be a happier place to live in.

Where is the inventor, the philosopher, the creative scientist, artist, poet or social idealist, whose work has not been hampered, whose life has not been injured or maimed, by clever critics? If clever people had had their way—if creative genius had not prevailed in spite of them—there would be to-day no art or science, philosophy or poetry, worthy the name. Keats was told by a brainy man who had got himself into a high and powerful position in the journalistic world, to "go back to his galley-pots". There is no doubt that the vulgar ebullitions of the brainy over Keats' immortal poems hastened his death. Of almost every great man similar stories may be found. That is one reason why Brains are probably the most destructive thing in the world. Again: what about the atrocities that are committed in the name of science?

"Not brains—the misdirection of cleverness." This is what most people think. But why direct cleverness? It is a thing to be deplored, not directed. It is a thing to allow to end, not to perpetuate. It is a disease of the mind, born of self-conceit and delusion. It is a state in which intuition is frustrated and creative genius is dammed back.

Mere cleverness and greatness never go together: it should be the business of society to see that the merely clever are not permitted to destroy the great. Cleverness in the service of greatness is another matter, legitimate and at times desirable.

Mental preening and prancing are antics that suit the clown. Yet people disport themselves in such antics unashamedly throughout modern society. Children should be taught to curb mere cleverness,



## BRAINS

to eschew the merely brainy, and to remain quiet and even dull, rather than participate in such foolery. Whilst this atmosphere of cleverness prevails, the Real enters not into life. This does not mean that there should be no fun, no jokes, no happiness. The greatest people, not the cleverest, make the best jokes, are capable of the most light-hearted enjoyment.

Were we not so clever, there might be more chance of the councils of the intelligent prevailing among us. Amid the welter of those "*many and various thoughts of the irresolute*"—as Shri Krishna puts it—the "*determinate reason which is but one in this mortal life*" is smothered.

Are we not suffering from the Plague of unreason in this "age of reason"? What is "the determinate reason"? It is something which supervenes when thoughts are dead—or rather, when the egotistic consciousness is no longer identified with thought, but thought *flows through* the brain, brought into being from a source within itself, greater than itself, which, however, in itself is thoughtless. That is the source of genius. That is the intuitive, the "determinate reason" of Shri Krishna. If it were thought, it would not be whole, one. It would not determine all thought towards Reality. "The determinate reason is *one* in this mortal life."

This determining reason, which is intuition, cannot manifest among the merely clever; indeed, the brainy element has to be dissolved before the brain can function as the vehicle of the "determinate reason."

The human brain itself is by nature designed to be a perfect instrument. Science cannot plumb the depths of its mystery, nor as yet express the possibilities which lie dormant within it. In the presence of the mysteries of the physical brain, the greatest scientists are mute.

Reverent muteness might nowadays well be made compulsory in some cases to save humanity from the onslaughts of the clever. In the School of Pythagoras at Crotona, the newly-entered were called "hearers". They were permitted to listen, but not to ask



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

questions, for the first five years of their novitiate. Would that a similar rule could be applied in our day! When I was a young woman this idea struck me as being so fine, so beautiful, that for some time I tried to put it into practice. It was an interesting and fruitful experiment. For with the stopping of prattling of the tongue, came a reaction upon the mind, which reaction gradually but surely imposed silence on the mind, too. So, there was quiet. There was stillness and calm. It was not a state of dullness or of nescience; but this self-imposed silence, making for quiet thoughts, tended to produce a mental gentleness, a non-violence of the intellect, in which state true thought—creative, intuitive thought—loomed upon the mental horizon from the unknown.

Here is a point which cleverness overlooks: In the great thinker, thought is self-initiated. The criterion of the flabby-minded has always been *the amount amassed from outside*. The criterion of the master-mind will always be *the power to initiate, to digest, to assimilate, from within*. The twain shall never meet; or rather, flabbiness must, in the natural order of things, give way to mental virility (unless flabbiness as expressed in to-day's world-follies has meanwhile destroyed human society).

Educationalists have not yet found out the way to use the brain. These, however, are not to blame. One has to remember that the average educationalist is a product of parental solicitude, which, being usually of the flabby, tends to reproduce and perpetuate flabbiness. So long as parents place before their children false ideas of life and its ends; urge their children to put themselves under the yoke of the soul-destroying competitive system in schools and colleges; map out careers for their children based upon that system—accept, in fact, the whole miserable machinery designed by them and their forefathers to minister to greed by destroying intelligence—educationalists must not be blamed.

The intelligence of our times has been cultured mainly on falsehood. It is mainly directed to the perpetuation of the false. It is fostered as an instrument of artificiality, hypocrisy, sensuality (under the guise of "freedom") narrow-mindedness (scientific or

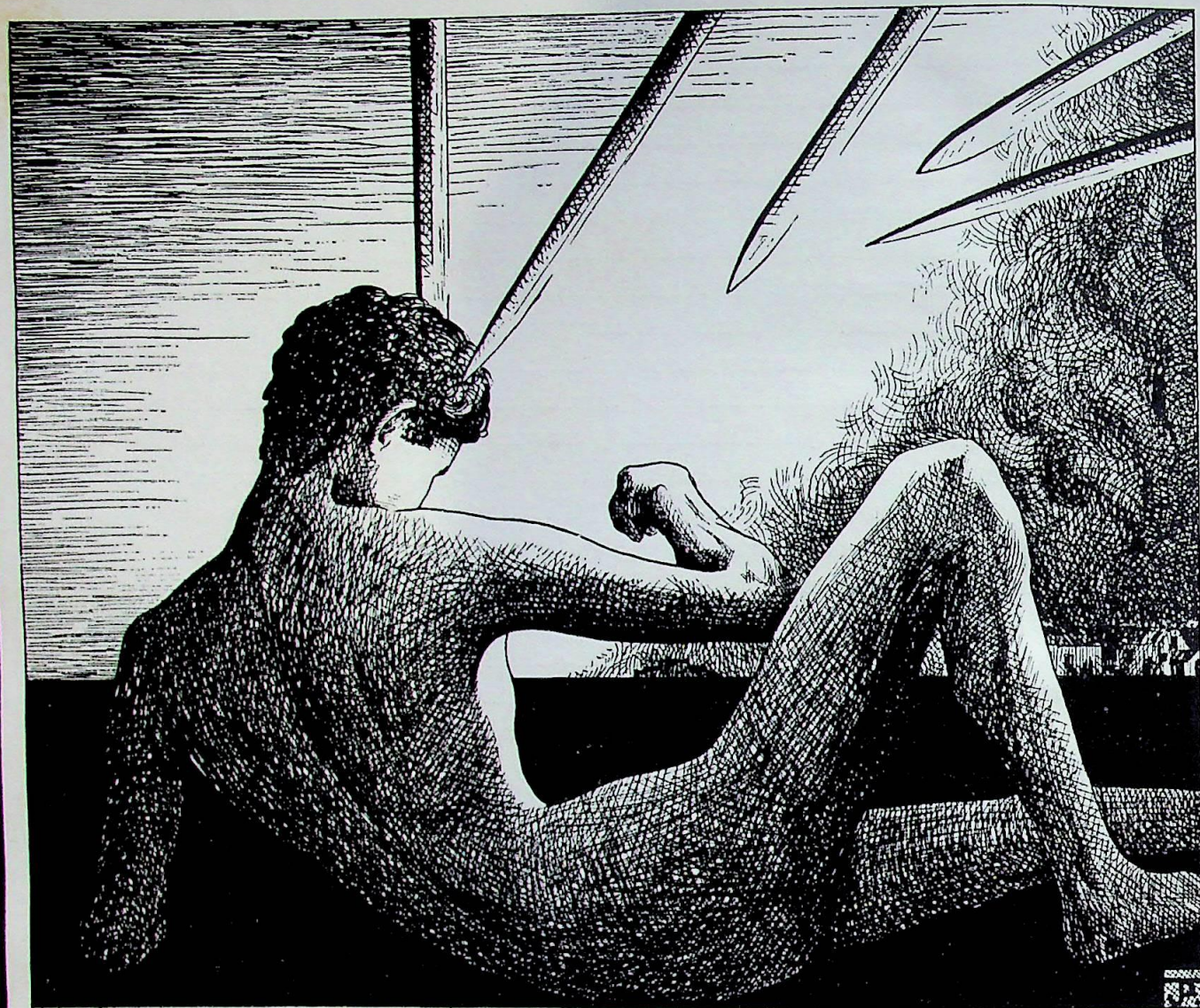


## BRAINS

otherwise) and delusion. Sciences and arts and literatures directed to these ends are even more pernicious than the savage barbarism which initiates or permits Italo-Abyssinian and Sino-Japanese wars. These last are but results of that mentality.

The weapon of the mind has in fact been forged to destroy instead of to build up human civilisation. Even science (knowledge) has been turned to that end. But power will have to become power-less-ness. Violence of thought, of criticism, of brilliant mentalising over trifles will have to die down, before true civilisation can begin. We will have to "become as little children". I will put it another way: The fighting power of the mind will have to be used to discern the Real and thereby to destroy—or rather, absorb—the unreal. Christ said: "*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*" This righteous violence has also been described by Shri Krishna: "*With the sword of the wisdom of the Self cleaving asunder this ignorance-born doubt, be established in yoga. Stand up, O Bharata.*" Civilisation commences in the man in whom personal thinking ends. Such a man owns no thoughts, for the Master of thoughts has taken control. Henceforth, in that man, thoughts are but the army of the intuition, going or coming at the behest of their Captain. He is free of "the modifications of the thinking principle". To such as he, men will turn for freeing.





"HUMANITY—PIERCED BY THE SWORDS FORGED BY THE FOLLOWERS OF CREEDS"



# RELIGIONS

A RELIGIOUS man need not have a Religion. "Christ was not a Christian : Mahommed was not a Mahomedan," is a wise saying. If these had been religionists, there would be no hope for their religions to-day.

Great souls have been in travail for Truth ; and humanity has poisoned the fruits of their travail. Religions, by which it endeavours to guide its immortal destinies, are now for the most part poisoned fruits.

Humanity may be likened to a man who is searching for understanding, pining for protection, whilst he is pierced by the swords forged by the followers of innumerable creeds.

The spirit of Grab has vitiated the teachings of our Masters. Religious institutions head the race for Power. No worldliness exceeds that which is frequently manifested by the self-constituted custodians of the other worlds.

The sun and the moon are priest and priestess of nature, powerful beyond the power of any human priest. Yet they make no claims, they wear no uniforms. Everything has its proper garment. The garment of the sun is of one light, and of the moon, another. The garment of man is wisdom ; for nature gave him no covering, and in wisdom alone may he find and create covering. He has created the priestly gown, and made it a mark of arrogance, not of wisdom. For who desires to advertise holiness, if he be holy ? Who lays claim to priestly power, if he truly possesses it ?

The uniforms of religions degrade Religion, which is of the Universal Essences, bound only by their laws—free, and able to free, only through their movements.

Who shall control, shelter or guide the Spirit of Man ?  
*"The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh"* and *"the Son of Man*



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

*hath no place to lay his head."*

Man has made of Religion a Plague, by usurping the custody of his brothers' souls; whereas to possess one's own soul, in patience, is the only true priestcraft.

The period of novitiate to the Religious Order is that in which one sets forth to discover the existence of one's own soul. There is only one Order—the universal Order. It is for plain man, everyday man. It is for people who are like Buddha or Jesus or Mahommed in that they come to it from the everyday world—high or low, rich or poor.

Somehow, we cannot envisage bishops' gaiters passing down the stars—even the yellow robe, which at least is lovely, savours of unreality when seen in the Light of Buddha. It is recorded that Christ had one coat, but no one ever suggested it was a uniform. Yet the vestments of those who constitute themselves His priests, are legion.

Christ's coat was poor and ordinary; but, through a strange twist in human psychology, modern peoples, especially of the West, have on the whole a rooted disinclination to accept as a prophet anyone who wears ordinary clothes. They have been brought up on pretty picture books of Bible stories, wherein all the women wear lovely clean and newly-dyed draperies, and all the men, ditto. Theirin, prophets all wear long white flowing robes or have naked bodies covered with the skin of a noble wild animal. Sartorial religion is the Western mode, to transgress which spells failure as a religious teacher. Yet, religious teachers should surely be as ordinary in matters of this sort, as were men of other time—wearing any clothes that come handy, like their Masters. Buddha adopted the beggar's robe because he could not follow his particular quest (being a Prince) except by identifying himself with beggars. He did a normal thing in his day. (The reddish yellow dyed with a certain stone is also a colour having definite natural significance. What I write here is not against the assumption of natural garments, proper to certain reasons and states, but against artificial priestly robes.) It is abnormal by all standards of truth, beauty, simplicity



## RELIGIONS

or Religion, to don a black coat and a high stiff white collar. Nothing in the universe is garmented in anything of that kind—the nearest approaches are crows and magpies, and even these are beautiful—yet, curiously enough, such a uniform does not give to its wearer individual uniqueness. Surely, a leader in Religion should be individually unique.

An artificial garment clothes artificial minds. No truly religious man would accept artificial holiness, but the superstitious do. The world is full of superstitious people and of Religions built on superstition; and the reactions from superstitious belief are unbelief, nescience. The religionists accuse one another; yet what is the difference between using a talisman and kissing a ring, or bowing to black gaiters or a saffron cloth? The discriminative intelligence is needed. "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones!"

The mediocre like badges: yet badges are usually but the marks of laziness, fear, servility, self-seeking and other qualities which go to make man anti-religious. He—like an ostrich with its head in the sand—fancies himself safe, if by taking refuge under badge or banner he but hides from his mental vision the desert of life which he has created for himself. A badge which is a natural garment of the soul is justifiable, but it must be earned. If we would know what truly constitutes a religious uniform, let us ask ourselves: What is a garment natural to the soul?

To hug illusions and to cause others to hug them! Here is a Plague indeed! This Plague is evoked by custodians of Religion, in the name of the Great Breaker of illusions.

Religions are the sources of more murders, discords and brutalities than perhaps any other factor in man's earthly life. This is so well-known that one hesitates to repeat it. If men would turn from religions to Religion, there would be little work left to do for diplomats and politicians, and none for soldiers.

But work has nowadays to be made for diplomats and for most politicians! The masses have to be bemazed and entangled for the sake of enslavement in standardised industry, and sacrifice in



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

war. It is so easy to hold people in bondage by playing upon their superstitions; upon their greed for gain in the next world if not in this; and upon their deep fears of the unknown. So the game goes on.

Religions are too often a nasty game, which will not bear investigation by straight people. They have plagued us all too long. We turn from the teachers to the taught; and from the taught to Those Pitiful Ones who laid down life itself for suffering humanity. If They cannot answer our call because of Religions, let us at least purge the world of that which has insisted on making a Christian of Christ, a Mahomedan of Mohammed, a Hindu of Krishna. It is difficult to do this without bitterness and destruction. The destruction and the bitterness will continue to come from the side of Religions. "Plain people" will, however, achieve Religion in spite of this; but their Religion will not have a uniform, a pulpit, or a creed.



# EPILOGUE

## CIVILISATION

NOW when the people of Israel had been brought to the depths of despair on account of the hardness of heart which God Himself had imposed upon the Egyptian king (so that in the end Pharaoh should get understanding), God caused a Plague to be sent upon Egypt, the tenth and most awful Plague of all, the destruction of the first-born. I quote the old story:

*"And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle.*

*"And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

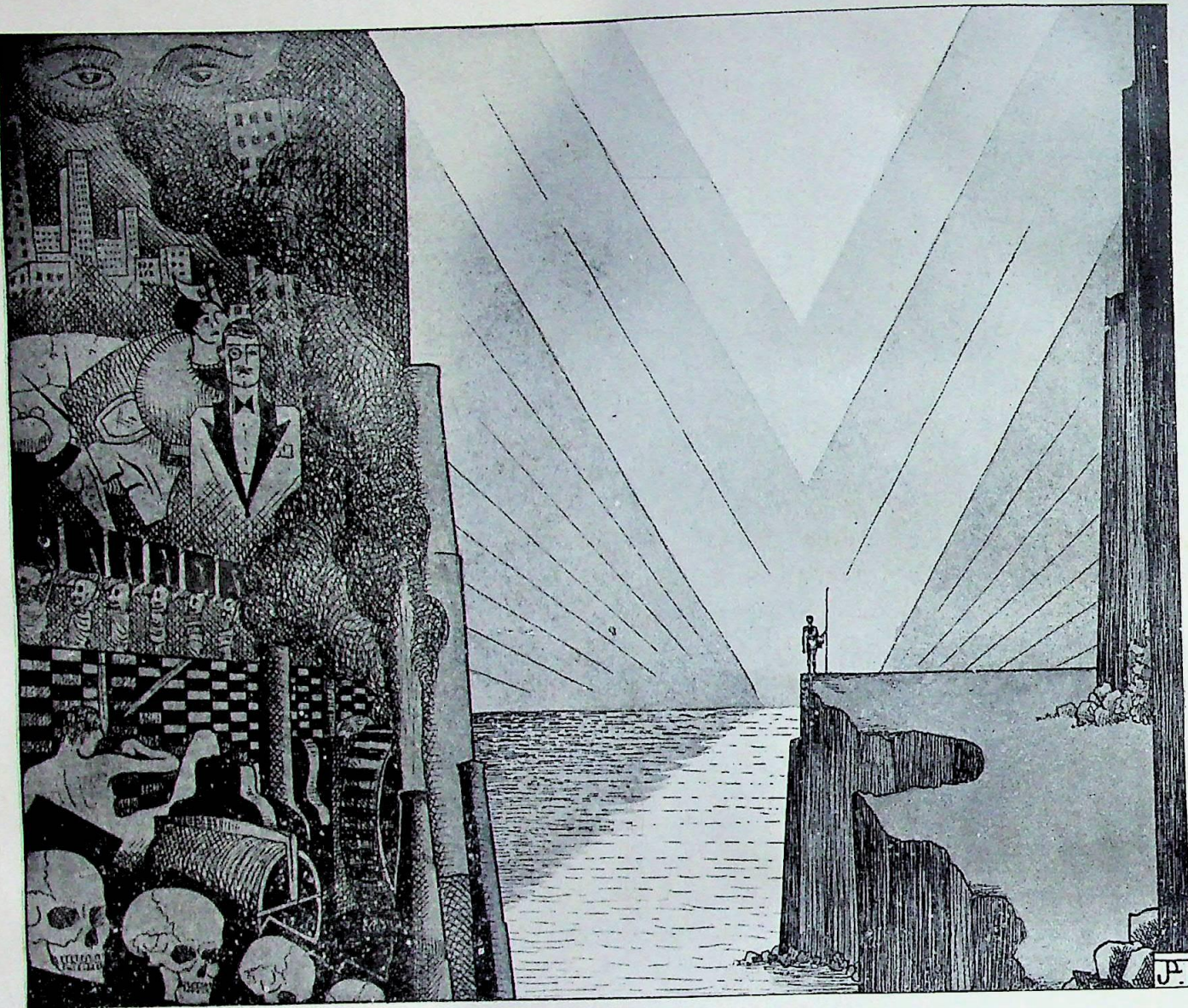
*"And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said . . . . . begone; and bless me also . . . .*

*"And the Egyptians . . . said, 'WE BE ALL DEAD MEN'."*

The eyes of the Egyptians had been opened. They saw that through the killing of their first-born, they were "all dead men". The sufferings of the Plagues which God had sent upon them because of their wilfulness and ignorance had at last brought upon them wisdom, and peace. For the Prophet blessed them before he departed. It is a grand, beautiful allegory, this old Bible story.

Where did Moses take the Israelites? He took them "into the wilderness" to sacrifice to their God. Thus were they brought out of bondage, and peace restored in Egypt. The Prophet obeyed the Lord's command, and took His people into the Wilderness.





"CIVILISED MAN HAS TO GO OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS OF SOLITARY VISION,  
SOLITARY JUDGMENT, SOLITARY ACTION."



## CIVILISATION

Civilisation is the first-born of the human race, but God has laid a heavy hand upon it, and it is dead, and "we be all dead men". In that old story, Moses was not afraid to take his people "into the Wilderness"; but in our day fear of the unknown and the untried is upon us, to add to our wretchedness, so that the world remains paralysed in face of the immensity of the horror that has fallen upon it.

James Hilton in *Lost Horizon* puts a description of our dead and dying Civilisation into the mouth of his High Lama. Speaking of the destruction to come: "It will be such a one, my son, as the world has not seen before. There will be no safety by arms, no help from authority, no answer in science. It will rage till every flower of culture is trampled, and all human beings are levelled in a vast chaos . . . . The Dark Ages that are to come will cover the whole world in a single pall; there will be neither escape nor sanctuary, save such as are too secret to be found or too humble to be noticed." He saw "the nations strengthening, not in wisdom but in vulgar passions and the will to destroy." He saw "their machine-power multiplying until a single weaponed man might have matched a whole army of the Grand Monarque;" and he perceived that "when they had filled the land and sea with ruin, they would take to the air . . . ." He foresaw "a time when man, exultant in the technique of homicide, would rage so hotly over the world that every precious thing would be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two milleniums, the small, the delicate, the defenceless—all would be lost like the lost books of Livy, or wrecked as the English wrecked the Summer Palace in Pekin."

That vision is now coming true. It will come even truer. Humanity stands aghast before the fruits of its own culture. In pain and anguish it begins to realise that the first-fruits of its vaunted Civilisation are rotten to the very core. War is the raging fever which symptomatises a poisoned body-social. There is little health left in trade, in education, in social relations, in arts and sciences. The gravest symptom now prevails—coma, unconsciousness even of the disease itself.



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

"There isn't safety anywhere" exclaims the American financier in *Lost Horizon*, "Those who thought there was were like a lot of saps trying to hide under an umbrella in a typhoon . . . . The whole game's going to pieces . . . . there isn't a soul in the world who knows what the rules are . . . ." The sentiments of the American, thought his chance acquaintance, Conway, the British Consul "fitted Baskul, and Delhi, and London, war-making and Empire-building, consulates and trade-concessions and dinner parties at Government House; there was a reek of dissolution over all . . . ."

A dead and dying Civilisation! A picture of our world to-day! This is Things-As-They-Are. This is Civilisation, the Tenth Plague! Our much-vaunted Progress, our Religions, our Education, our Commercial Enterprise have led us to—exactly nothing! For our chaos is the negation of science, arts, civics, philosophy—of all, in fact, that constitutes Civilisation.

Man is made for happiness. There is but one test of a culture, of a Civilisation: *is it making men happy?* I have lived for 58 years but I have not met one happy person except among those few who have become de-Civilised and gone out into the Wilderness.

The path to real Civilisation now lies in becoming de-Civilised. That, viewed from Thing-As-They-Are, is the path into the Wilderness. But it is the one way in which most people are afraid to go. And so, chaos continues. Fear is killing mankind. Obviously, it is not a way in which a Hitler, a Mussolini, or even—in his different world—a Gandhi can lead us. Our mistake lies in looking for a lead; for in the ultimate analysis there can be no lead in the things that most matter. Every man must be self-led, when he sets out into this Wilderness. Actually, it would be impossible for the greatest leader on earth to take us upon the way thereto. Yet one thing is certain: Civilisation has to undo itself. Civilised man has to go out into the Wilderness of solitary vision, solitary judgment, solitary responsibility and action, before society as a whole can be saved.

Moses led his people out. They were young. We are older.



## CIVILISATION

We have grown up. No Pharaoh can now decide for us. No Moses now can lead us.

There is no real war between the nations. Therein are we "deceived by the shadow of appearances", as Kipling's Lama puts it. This war-making is but a phase of the deeper war within the hearts of men. That war demands courage, endurance, skill, faithfulness, vision, mercy and obedience such as no soldier could ever be asked to give. It demands courage of conviction in all one's family and social relationships; endurance of the scorn and neglect of one's fellows; skill in steering straight for the goal of true Civilisation amid the chaos of the Civilised; faithfulness to one's day-to-day vision of the Real; kindness to all things animate and inanimate; obedience to the small, still voice of conscience, of intuition. These are religious virtues, in the following of which a man may be attacked by the religious. They connote a culture in pursuing which a man will certainly expose himself to the contempt of the cultured.

The country that shall first find in her leaders, men and women imbued with such a spirit, will become the saviour of modern Civilisation. I think that that country, in spite of every difficulty and set-back, might be India. But only the spiritual stand in politics, in commerce and in education can save the world. Will Indians have the courage, the love, the splendid faithfulness, to take this stand not only in the political, but, above all, in the industrial and educational fields? It must mean great suffering and apparent loss, apparent ignominy and weakness, apparent failure in the "forefront of the nations"—whatever that may mean, considering the sorry spectacle of the nations to-day. But Truth there can be no compromise. Surely, there can be no two ways of saving Civilisation.

Once more, I return to the grand story of Moses and Pharaoh, Moses was but a simple man—one of the crowd. His heart was bursting with love. It was a faithful heart. But he was sore afraid. First of all, he was afraid of Pharaoh, for Moses did not know the ways of courts; and next, he was afraid of the opinion of his own people. He was not sure of the reactions of the



## THE TEN PLAGUES OF MODERN CIVILISATION

Proletariat. He was in the difficulty of every little man who is faced with a stupendous task. So he went to God, and said :

*" Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt ? "*

God did not answer him directly, but merely said these words of tremendous import : *" Certainly I will be with thee . . . . "*

Moses' reaction was that of the frightened man in all the ages : *" When I come unto the children of Israel and say ' The God of your fathers hath sent me ' they shall say to me ' What is His name ? ' What shall I say to them ? "*

God answered Moses : *" I AM THAT I AM. Thus shalt thou say : I AM hath sent me to you. "*

God taught Moses Individual Uniqueness. He did not spare His Prophet. He gave him no soft comfort.

To bring God into the Civilisation of his day was the task of the Prophet. He faced it and carried all before him.

To-day, some have a different name for God ; but names do not matter. Suppose we call God the Individual Conscience, the Individual Intuition. Let each follow that in all things, abstaining from strife. So, each one shall combine in himself Pharaoh the Kingly Liberator and Moses the Fearless Subject. Both are needed that glory may be manifest. If we permit each one to play in us the part ordained, the Ten Plagues of Modern Civilisation will be no more.











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